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ABSTRACT

Presented is a report on a comparative study of the educational and occupational aspirations and expectations of Cambodian, Hmong, Laotian, and Vietnamese adolescents and youth in the Minneapolis-St.Paul (Twin Cities), Minnesota, metropolitan area. Data were culled from interviews with about 160 informants using a "story" approach as a data collection device. Thirty-three stories about successful, moderately successful, and unsuccessful adults in each of the four ethnic communities were constructed, but because of time limitations, only the stories in the moderate category were used. Adolescents in each of the groups were asked to critique a story and edit it to fit their own lives; the edited stories were then discussed, and the discussion and modified story supplied the study data. Separate findings are presented for each of the four groups. In general, across all four groups, adolescents and youth held educational aspirations higher than their parents had achieved. They saw ethnic prejudice as a barrier to their employment success, but one that could be overcome. Only the Hmong have a refugee culture that might support long-term rather than episodic use of public welfare. Their risk of welfare dependency seems highest. The upcoming group of Hmong seems likely to bifurcate into two social groups: one middle class and the other incapable of achieving full self-sufficiency. These and other findings must be understood from the perspectives of adolescent and youth development. The non-Vietnamese Southeast Asian high school students seem to hold goals similar to local Native American and some Black and Hispanic adolescents, while the Vietnamese students hold higher educational aspirations. Appendices present research notes, the 33 stories, and a sample of the interview worksheet. (BJV)

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A STUDY OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN REFUGEE YOUTH IN THE TWIN CITIES OF MINNEAPOLIS AND ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA

Final Report

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Family Support Administration
Office of Refugee Resettlement

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A STUDY OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN REFUGEE YOUTH IN THE TWIN CITIES OF MINNEAPOLIS AND ST. PAUL., MINNESOTA

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Under contract to the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement, an innovative, qualitative social research study was done on the educational and occupational aspirations and expectations of about 160 Cambodian, Hmong, Laotian and Vietnamese adolescents and youth in the Minneapolis-St. Paul (Twin Cities), Minnesota metropolitan area. The study was focused by the scope of the work's "Primary Study Questions."

Data were collected in small, homogeneous groups of youth from the same ethnic groups, gender and age (e.g., 16-17-year-old Hmong girls) in a variety of settings such as public school classrooms, social services agency center, private residences, and a Boy Scouts of America meeting. The data collection tool was a story of success constructed from interviews with adults in the appropriate ethnic community. These were stories about both men and women who were seen in each ethnic community as very successful, moderately successful, or unsuccessful. Thirty-three stories were developed, but only eight were used because of time limitations: moderately successful stories for men and for women specific to each ethnic community. The adolescents were asked to critique the story and edit it. The critique was the way of learning whether the story seemed "real," and the editing was the way of changing the story to fit the adolescents' own lives, aspirations, and expectations. The story was used also as a basis for group discussion. Three females and one male led the group discussions in English, which was the common language of all but the recent refugees, with female staff always meeting with the adolescent girls and young women. Two adult staff were present, one to lead the discussion and one to take notes. The discussion and the modified story were the study data, and these were analyzed using a content analysis scheme in which themes in the data were made explicit. These themes were specific to each ethnic community and were used to understand similarities and differences within and between ethnic communities. The themes also constitute the answers to the Primary Study Questions.

The study limitations include insufficient time for data collection in school settings, the social control created in the group by its members, thus reducing the range of responses, our inability to interview youth in vocational schools and in marginal groups, e.g., street youth, delinquents, etc., due to time constraints. All community agencies requested facilitated access to the youth.

The study findings are presented as narrative essays following the study questions. Among important generalizations is the major finding that although the subjects are all Southeast Asian refugees, each of the four ethnic groups is culturally distinct and must be understood as such. Thus, distinctions must be made between, for example, the Hmong and the Lao, even though many of each have come from the same country. Second, it is important to remember that these are adolescents and youth and thus, their aspirations in many ways reflect those of adolescents. This is true particularly because questions about the future tap cognitive ability, as well as language proficiency and ethnic culture. Some youth simply cannot yet comprehend the idea of future due to their cognitive developmental level.

A third finding across ethnic communities is that among college and university students, there is more similarity between male and female aspirations and expectations than there is at the high school level. But here too there are differences between ethnic communities. Thus, for example,

aspirations among current Vietnamese college students are for advanced professional education regardless of gender, while aspirations for comparable groups of Laotian, Cambodian and Hmong are somewhat lower, with different career choices for the young women.

A fourth finding across ethnic community is about English language competence. More high school youth with higher comprehension and speaking proficiency, most of whom have been in the United States longer, have aspirations to go to college and technical school than do those with less language competence. The form of these aspirations is shaped by ethnicity and gender.

Finally, and again among high school students, those who are the most recent arrivals are more likely than those longer in residence to aspire to a technical education in a craft such as auto mechanics or to have no or unclear educational and occupational plans, and to talk about paraprofessional employment and marriage. Again, there are ethnic and gender differences.

The Vietnamese

Overall, Vietnamese adolescents and youth present idealized American aspirations for education and occupation. In general, they aspire for higher education as a preparation for professional positions such as engineers and computer scientists in local corporations. For those whose hard work and constant studying cannot overcome their modest academic performance, aspirations are toward the higher-paid vocations or small business ownership for males and clerical or service-sector work for the girls. Very few adolescents (14-17 years old) and no youth (18-22 years old) were unclear about their educational and occupational aspirations, with the exception of recent arrivals (less than one year in the United States). In contrast to youth from the other ethnic communities, the Vietnamese show almost no evidence in gender differences in aspirations or expectations for school or work for those with high academic performance. For those doing less well in school, clear gender differences are seen in occupation choice but no difference is seen in expectation of entering the work force.

The Vietnamese adolescents are focused on schoolwork during class and at home. They study after school in the afternoons and evenings and seem to participate little in after-school activities. For them "school is a job," and they develop strong work habits which are seen among Vietnamese university students who also study long hours, often in the library so as to avoid the distractions of family life. In this case, they are supported by parents who "sacrifice" for their children, with the expectation that they will be supported in old age. Hence, in families where it is financially feasible, few adolescents or youth are pressured to hold after-school or weekend part-time jobs, although some "help out" in family business and most have some summer work experience.

Vietnamese youth expect a lot of themselves. In school, they expect to do very well if they "work hard" and they expect to do well later in college and in their profession. Those long-term U.S. residents who do not intend to go to college expect to do well in business. Family attitudes and values support these aspirations and expectations of present and future success. There is a strong emphasis on "making it" with the clear expectation that you will be expected to contribute to both of your families--your own and your parents. In this way, parents "invest" in their children, for the career of

their child determines in part the quality of their own later life. Allegiance is to yourself and then to your immediate family.

This general picture does not include those who have come to Minnesota as adolescents or youth during the last two years. These are "greenhorns" to the Vietnamese-American community and they are expected by it to do far less well than those who have been here longer, due to minimal language skills and inadequate educational preparation.

Two distinct groups of Vietnamese youth were interviewed: newly arrived youth whose aspirations tended to be in the trades and college-bound or college youth who aspired toward the professions.

In evaluating the stories of a Vietnamese woman and a Vietnamese man who choose technical careers, the Vietnamese youth express the conviction that the individual has the power to determine his or her own future, and that the route to success is hard work. They believe that they have been given many opportunities in the United States and that they should take advantage of these opportunities.

The Khmer

The Khmer youth of Cambodia must be understood as two distinct populations: those who arrived in the United States without close family members and those who came with some vestiges of their immediate and/or extended families. In general, the Khmer youth not yet of college age or not attending college were relatively unclear about their personal educational and occupational futures. Non-college youth generally spoke of vocational aspirations, with specific examples given for training in local vocational-technical institutes (e.g. automotive technician, machinist) or on the job (e.g. police, military). College youth expressed a wide range of professional interests, including high technology engineering (e.g. computers), architecture, politics, and law. There was interest expressed also in the human services.

Overall, all Khmer adolescents and youth seem to be suffering the results of the war, moreso than youth in other Southeast Asian ethnic communities. Symptoms associated with having suffered trauma seem almost common among them, as is a pervasive lack of confidence in themselves or in the future. They are far more likely to be relatively passive in the search for and use of social brokers, but are responsive when approached by these human services workers, indigenous and outsiders. These youth have a relatively poor understanding of our occupational structure and its relations to our educational system. These patterns are more pronounced among the youth detached from their families, but occur among most youth interviewed. It is expected that there is in the Khmer community a relatively high endemic rate of personal troubles related to their horrific war experience.

Among adolescents and youth who arrived with some family, there are gender differences in educational and occupational aspirations. Girls and young women lack personal confidence and a sense of personal efficacy in the present and over the future. They are poorly informed about educational and occupational possibilities, lacking a basic vocabulary of words, concepts, and ideas about the world of work. They aspire for employment as a general activity, not to an occupation. Emphasis is put on the social career of school, work, and marriage rather than on any combination of marriage and an occupational career. These youth are expected to contribute to their family

directly by nurturing, that is, taking care of the family unit and taking on the traditional role of women.

Boys and young men seem ungrounded in contemporary Minnesota options of school and work. They have aspirations but little expectations of success at these -- "I would like to do x but I don't know if it will work. It probably won't." This attitude fits with the norm proscribing bragging and commitment of the occupational self in front of others, but it appears to be more than this. It is experienced, we believe, as an existential condition of being unclear, unknowing, unwilling to try, and being afraid -- the debility caused by war. These youth oriented to work and a job, not to an occupation or to an occupational career. Theirs is a world of the present, one which is lived one step at a time, not a world of plans and future.

The Lao

The Lao in Minnesota have a more scattered residential pattern than the other Southeast Asian groups; it was more difficult to focus on the identity of this group than on the other ethnic groups studied. Most of the Lao in Minnesota are from lowland urban areas of Laos, and the adults had at least several years of education, some of them completing high school and even going beyond. The Lao do not appear to have the high level of entrepreneurial spirit that the Vietnamese do, although a few do own small businesses; nor do they seem as loathe to start at the bottom of the ladder and work their way up, as the Hmong do.

Expectations that most Lao parents have for their teens is that they get some kind of vocational or community college training. The children tend not to have a sufficiently high academic performance in high school to be likely candidates for college scholarships; a number of fathers see military service as a good alternative for these youth, with the possibility that the G.I. bill could later finance a college education. The Lao youth, while they entertain "dreams" of becoming highly paid professionals, generally took a realistic, almost harsh view of their abilities and chose careers that could be attained through technical training.

The young Lao men we encountered had the most distinctive dress and hair-styles of any of the Southeast Asian youth. They had adopted a mild punk style that asserts their identity as different from that of their parents. In spite of a rebellious look, the Lao youth were polite and cooperative. However, their appearance might limit the types of entry-level jobs that would be offered to them and thus delay their entry into the work force.

The Lao youth express typical American middle-class materialistic desires; one common goal is to own a home in the suburbs. Most believe that self-sufficiency should be achieved before marriage, and that the number of children should be limited to what the family could support. Their post-high school educational goals generally do not include programs that last more than two years, so they could be expected to begin their careers at a younger age than other college-bound Southeast Asian youth.

The Hmong

The future of the Hmong seems more problematic than that of any other Southeast Asian ethnic group. Early marriage, large family size, high rates of welfare dependency among their parents, victimization, and alienation may make it difficult for many Hmong youth to escape the cycle of poverty and dependency.

A considerable number of youth whose parents held influential positions in the military or village leadership in Laos hold high expectations of themselves and are being encouraged by their elders to excel in high school and college. But a sizable number of youth--although their parents do expect them to study hard at school--are receiving inadequate guidance on how to make decisions that will lead them to become independent of public assistance programs in adulthood.

Girls particularly are at risk for getting insufficient education to attain a place in the work force beyond an entry-level job. Marriage age for Hmong girls in the United States is as low as 12 years, with few girls managing to graduate from high school without being married first. While many girls try to stay in high school even while raising their children, the time that they must devote to domestic duties makes it difficult for them to give much attention to their studies. For young men, early marriage may mean that their first job will have to support not just themselves but their wife and at least one child. The unavailability of entry-level jobs that could cover the expenses of a family may determine that these young men will delay entry into the work force for years, perhaps indefinitely.

Most Hmong echo the counsel of their leadership: that girls should wait until age 18 to marry, that youth should try to get a college education, and that families should strive for self-sufficiency. However, the youth acknowledge what a strong pull culture and tradition exerts on their lives; they recognize that it is easier to express your ideals for a successful American life than to follow them. As a 14-year-old girl said, "What you say is easy. What you do is hard."

Conclusions

In general, and across all four groups, adolescents and youth held educational aspirations higher than their parents had achieved. Overall, the youth saw ethnic prejudice as a barrier to their employment success, but one which could be overcome. The Hmong, alone among the four groups, have a refugee culture which might support long-term rather than episodic use of public welfare. Their risk of longer-term "welfare dependency" seems highest. The upcoming generation of Hmong seems likely to bifurcate into two social groups: one middle class and the other incapable of achieving full self-sufficiency.

These and the other findings must be understood from the powerful perspectives of adolescent and youth development. To us, these adolescents were adolescent-like and, hence, their aspirations and expectations should be understood also in comparison to youth in American and other ethnic and religious communities. If this is done, the clearest similarities in aspirations are among the non-Vietnamese recent arrivals. The high school students overall seem to hold goals similar to local Native Americans and some Black and

some Hispanic adolescents, while the Vietnamese hold higher educational and occupational aspirations.

Bibliography

In conjunction with this study, *Southeast Asian Refugee Youth: An Annotated Bibliography* has been compiled by Ruth E. Hammond and Glenn L. Hendricks. This bibliography will be available at cost from the Southeast Asian Refugee Studies Project, Center for Urban and Regional Affairs, University of Minnesota, 330 Hubert H. Humphrey Center, 301 19th Avenue South, Minneapolis, MN 55455.

THE STUDY

The Research Topic

The federal Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) offered Contract No. 660-86-0216 to three research groups to do a qualitative field study of Southeast Asian adolescents' aspirations and expectations about education and employment. This study was given focus by the ORR Statement of Work which listed ten sets of questions, called the Primary Study Questions, as a guide.

Primary Study Questions

A. What aspirations do refugee youth have with regard to their education and careers? What employment opportunities do they hope to have when they begin working (i.e., begin their careers)? What goals for employment and personal achievement do they have?

B. What are the expectations of refugee youth as to the employment opportunities that are available to them? Do they expect to have the same or similar occupations as their parents, or to have the same or similar employment difficulties as their parents may have had in finding appropriate work in the U.S.?

C. What kinds of employment opportunities are available to refugee youth? (During high school; after high school; while enrolled in post-high school training or education programs?) What barriers and problems do they have in taking advantage of these opportunities?

D. What attitudes and values do refugee youth have about their own achievement in school and at work? How do they view their own efforts and achievements, individually and as a peer group? How do they view these in relation to their non-refugee peers? In relation to their own parents and other adult members of their ethnic group?

E. What is the role of refugee youth in the economic status of their families? What is their view of this role? Do they consider their current education and employment efforts to be primarily for their own benefit and development, or on behalf of the family or community?

F. What are the expectations (and aspirations, if different) of refugee youth regarding their own financial independence? How does this relate to the economic self-sufficiency of their family? What plans have been made or goals set, if any, for their own financial future, and/or for that of their family's?

G. What kinds of strategies do refugee youth use in pursuit of education and employment? How, if at all, are these strategies integrated within the family? Are they part of or coordinated with employment strategies of other members? Are there broader (extra-familial)

plans, strategies, or issues which influence those of individual youth?

H. Generally, how do refugee youth view their future? How do they view their adult role in family and community? How do they view their own efforts toward individual self-sufficiency in relation to the future of their ethnic community and their cultural identity? What do they consider to be appropriate, inappropriate, necessary, and unnecessary changes in their own abilities, beliefs and actions in order to achieve their goals? What do they consider to be effects of such changes, if any, on themselves, their families, and their ethnic community?

I. What problems do refugee youth see in reaching their goals? Are they primarily a matter of personal effort and capability? Are they structural or institutional? What role (positive, negative, both) do they ascribe to their refugee status, ethnicity, language, sex, and race?

J. Where and to whom do refugee youth look for guidance, assistance, and information? Who are their role models? Where do they seek help for problems, or seek information about matters relating to their education and employment (current and future)? What kinds of help do they typically receive? How do they view its usefulness?

The Research Methods

Story-Based Interviews

To answer these research questions, an innovative qualitative research method was designed.

Stories were constructed for each ethnic group, outlining for males and females separately the life stories of those who became unsuccessful, moderately successful, or successful in the United States. The themes of each composite study were learned in individual interviews with members of each ethnic community who were in their mid 20s to 40s. The story was to serve as a biographical proxy, thus eliminating the need for direct questions about a youth's background. The thirty-three stories that were developed by this method are found in Appendix B.

Three changes were made in the original plan as a result of the pretests. First, stories for girls were developed resulting in explicit boy (man), girl (woman) texts. This reflected the finding that there are almost universally different aspirations, expectations, and career paths for boys and girls. Second, field tests showed that there was time only to discuss one story each hour so it was decided to use the story of moderate success appropriate to the ethnicity and gender for the group. Last, group discussion was not taped. Instead, when possible, a second staff person attended and took notes. The staff person leading the group or another adult present also took notes. (See Appendix C for the group discussion recording form).

The story was used in a group of (ideally) four to eight youth, homogeneous in ethnic group and gender, and with a small age range (two to

four years). The purpose of the study was presented in English and when appropriate in the ethnic language. Then each group member was given his/her own copy of the appropriate ethnic/gender story. The group was asked to follow along with the group leader's oral reading of the text. Then, time was spent defining words or clarifying phrases. Next, the story was begun again, with the leader reading one line at a time. The group member was asked to edit the story by changing any word or phrase so as to better reflect his/her own biography or to correct confusions, omissions, mistakes, or other errors in the text. Each of these changes was noted and discussed very briefly. The leader used two questions to structure the discussion. First, "Was the story realistic?" Second, "If it was your story, what would be different?" (What would you change to make this your story?)

When the youth's English competence allowed it, the whole story was used to stimulate group discussion about group and personal aspirations and expectations about school and work.

The youth's written and verbal responses to the text constitute their public understanding (i.e., what they will say in a group of ethnic age/gender peers with one of us present) of aspirations and expectations appropriate for someone of their ethnic background.

On the following pages are examples of the unedited story as presented to the respondent and a heavily edited version marked by a youth.

Bounchanh arrived in the U.S. with three younger brothers and two sisters in 1983 when he was 17. His parents were still in Laos, and his father had been in a reeducation camp for eight years.

Bounchanh had attended a village school in Laos for three years. He helped his brothers and sisters to escape to a Thai refugee camp in 1979. He studied there by paying a tutor.

He wanted to get a good education in the U.S., but all he got out of studying during his first year at the University were a lot of headaches. He realized he wasn't cut out for college, so he transferred to technical school and learned to be a machinist.

He liked working with his hands, and he made enough money as a machinist to afford a modest three-bedroom house in the city.

When he had enough for a down payment for a house, he married his girlfriend, who had just managed to graduate from high school. She had a sewing job. Together they didn't have a lot of money for luxuries, but they had enough to live on. They had four children.

Bounchanh worked a lot of overtime whenever his wife was on maternity leave so they could keep up the payments on their house. He hoped to move out to the suburbs someday so his children would not be tempted by the evil influences of city life and so they would be able to go to high-quality suburban schools.

I arrived in the United States with my family in 1980, when I was 19 years old.

I and my family had lived in a refugee camp in Thailand for four years before that.

I was the third of 12 children. My father went to English school, but he didn't get a job because he didn't think he could make enough to support his big family. My mother made money because she was old and didn't speak English.

Mai was an average-looking girl who did do that well in school. But she was very obedient to her mother and father, and had a sweet temper. She worked hard around the house helping my mother take care of the house, and go to store for her because she tire to go. I study when I done with my work.

When I was 15, boys started coming to visit me at my parents' house. One of them was a young man who was just finishing his high school and some aren't finish. master's degree in computer science. I wondered why such a smart man would be interested in me when I was not that smart nor high school beautiful, but he said he preferred to have a wife who was not that bright because she would need her husband all her life, whereas an intelligent woman could take care of herself and might not be faithful. When I was 15 I still scare of boys, when boy come to visit me I don't want to stay alone with them. I ask my sister to stay with me.

Mai married the computer scientist when she was 15 years old and dropped out of the 9th grade a few months later after she got pregnant. Because her husband had a good job, they bought a nice house and were able to take vacations all over the country. She took good care of his house while he went to work and fixed delicious food for him to eat. She never had to go to work but stayed home and took care of their five children.

I don't want to get married this soon I married when I want to married when I finish with everything that I had planing for my future. I still want to go to college. because living in this country is a big chance and great experience to prove that you can do what you had dream- and work hard to build your future life to make it more easier for your family. If I were married I don't want to have alot of kids because It's hard to take care your kid.

Each group session lasted at least one hour. Groups with more than ten youth or with several youth of low English language proficiency were difficult to lead. At those times, valid data were collected from those members who seemed to understand the procedure.

Youth agencies, youth groups, and private homes were the best settings, with school classrooms least satisfactory due to the ease of disruption and distraction. Final interviews were done late in the school year and this made group management more difficult.

Gender was kept homogeneous (e.g., a female staff for a female group) whenever possible, and always so with the girls.

Some groups lasted more than two hours and became intense moments of meeting and confirmation between the leader, representing the Americans, and the youth who in their own eyes may never become a "real American."

Each group and its contact person were given the opportunity to include that adult in the discussion.

Study Population

A non-representative sample was drawn from among those 14 to 22 years of age from the local ethnic communities living in the seven-county metropolitan area: (N=169). Three 23-24-year-olds and four 13-year-olds were included because they were members of the friendship groups being interviewed.

Minneapolis: 100
Saint Paul: 42
Suburban Minneapolis:
Brooklyn Park: 8
Blaine: 6
Suburban Saint Paul:
Rosemount: 13

The study population by ethnicity, age and gender was as follows:

Age	Cambodian		Hmong		Lao		Vietnamese		Totals
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	
13	-	-	2	2	-	-	-	-	4
14-15	2	1	6	7	2	1	5	3	27
16-17	5	5	7	9	8	13	9	10	66
18-19	4	6	8	5	4	9	5	7	48
20-21	3	5	1	2		1	3	4	19
22-23	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	3
24	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Totals	15	17	24	25	14	24	23	26	169

An effort was made to include adolescents in roughly the same proportion as they are found in the larger population of the main two counties in the Twin Cities (Henrepin County which includes Minneapolis and Ramsey County which includes Saint Paul).

Hmong adolescents comprise about 50 percent of the refugee youth in secondary school, followed by about 22 percent Vietnamese, 18 percent Lao and 10 percent Cambodian.

The study population was found using intermediaries in local ethnic group association, youth-serving agencies (e.g., settlement house), youth groups (e.g., Boy Scouts of America), and the public schools, as well as youth known to the research staff by virtue of their other roles, e.g., ESL teacher, Vietnamese University student, graduate level psychology intern in the University's Office of International Education.

No attempt was made to develop a scientific sample and none was required by the Statement of Work. Rather, a purposive sample was formed in which is found a wide variety of differences in age, gender, social class, years in the United States, years in refugee camps, English language competency, and similar characteristics. No attempt is made to generalize findings to specific subpopulations and none was required by the Statement of Work. Rather, generalizations will be ideas about populations.

Data Analysis

A formal data analysis design was developed following the content analysis methodology. It was to be applied to the text editing and to youth's comments. The formal analysis proved unnecessary because the group leaders were able to pick out discussion themes using their notes. This reflects the limited range of answers within each discussion group and also within each ethnic community. Each staff became somewhat more knowledgeable about one ethnic group and hence, better able to find themes and other problems in the discussion.

Study Limitations

A major limitation is the absence of a sample of enrolled vocational school students, ages 19 to 21 years old. Appointments for interviews were set too close to the end of the school year. A second subpopulation missing consisted of those who are marginal to public and/or ethnic community programs and services, that is, those who have dropped out of school and are not working or are working in the underground ethnic economy or engaged in illegal street economy selling drugs, pimping, or the like.

Too great a reliance on the use of public schools as a locus of interviews resulted in group interview settings which were difficult--too many youth, not enough privacy, and an inflexible time unit.

Summary

An innovative qualitative field study was done of 169 Southeast Asian adolescents and youth to learn their educational and occupational aspirations and expectations. Typical ethnic and gender success stories were constructed

from interviews with adults in each ethnic community and these were changed by the adolescents to reflect their own biographies and future plans. A modified content analysis method was used to find themes in the data, and these themes were organized to answer in a narrative the Primary Study Questions.

The Research Context

The ORR Statement of Work called for an innovative qualitative field study of Southeast Asian adolescents' aspirations and expectations about school and work. This was a luxury because it allowed the researchers to specify how they proposed to answer the Primary Study Questions. The final study design and methods reflected these questions, the local Southeast Asian population, the study locale, and our professional orientation -- youth development.

Our research group differed from the two others in part because of our grounding to the issues of adolescence and adolescent and youth development. These are our primary perspectives. This introduction to our perspective is intended to sensitize the reader to these issues as found among the Southeast Asian refugee youth.

Minnesota as Context

The Twin Cities of Minneapolis and Saint Paul are a seven-county metropolitan area of about two million inhabitants. They are the major population locus of the state, the home of the State Capitol, and the state and regional educational and commercial center. The state's economic structure is shifting, with business now given more importance than agriculture. High technology invention and manufacture complement the huge national corporations and headquarters here (e.g., 3M, Honeywell, Pillsbury, General Mills, Control Data, etc.), and an active retail clothing market. Higher education too is an industry and the state land grant school (University of Minnesota) and about ten other public and private colleges and universities are located in the metropolitan area.

Minnesota is known as a politically and socially progressive state where its predominantly Caucasian citizens (of Northern and Eastern European heritage) enjoy a relatively high quality of life. High school graduation is at about 94 percent statewide, and the state has a relatively low unemployment rate, particularly in the metropolitan area of Minneapolis and St. Paul.

Minnesota overall is a middle-class white world known for its progressive sociopolitical life, its high quality of life, its hockey, its lakes and its long and difficult winters.

Into this milieu were drawn more than 30,000 Southeast Asian refugees from Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam. They joined other Asian immigrants from Thailand, Korea, ethnic Chinese from several countries, and about 1,200 refugees from elsewhere. Currently about 46 percent of the Southeast Asian refugees are under the age of 18 years old.

This study reports on the aspirations and expectations for both vocational and life style futures of the Southeast Asian refugee youth living in the Twin Cities. Its findings are considered to be tentative, for this is a

population about which little is known and traditional research sampling techniques are ineffective. Most existing data speaks to "Asian-American" populations and since it includes a number of individuals who do not share the refugee experience it is difficult to extrapolate to this particular population segment.

Introduction: A Youth Development Study

The study findings are organized by ethnic group and within that by the Request for Proposal's "Primary Study Questions," so as to provide the presentation with more integrity. It remains to introduce these findings so that the reader will know our perceptions and have a context for interpretation.

It is suggested that this research group differs from those of our California and Pennsylvania colleagues by our primary orientation to adolescent and youth development. Hence, we approached the study as being about youth who are refugees rather than refugees who are youth. So, too, with the interviews. We interviewed youth and listened first to that, and then to their gender, ethnicity, social class, and the like. Hence, in our minds, we compare these youth and what we have learned from them and about them first to other youth of the same age and then to children and then to adults. This done, we then compare one group of refugees to another.

One consequence of our orientation was that the ORR's primary study questions were placed first in the context of normal adolescent and youth development--an abstract, artificial world in which are found typical patterns of individual development along the continua of biophysiological changes, cognitive changes, changes in ego functioning, changes in the structure of reasoning about ethical issues, changes in social relationships, including those with parents and peers, and the like. Added next were the distinctions between chronological age and developmental ages and the typical incongruence between these at certain points and in certain domains. Then, social context was added, including neighborhood, community, biography (time, family, ethnicity, etc.), and the like. Moving along this mental model allowed us to assess youth responses first as more or less youth-like and then as more or less typical of one or another ethnic group.

So it was with the basic ideas of "future," personal goals, educational aspirations and expectations, and occupational aspirations and expectations. This introduction continues with a short discussion of ideas within the context of normal adolescent and youth development.

Developmental A-Synchrony

Developmental a-synchrony is used here to refer to two ideas: the incongruence between chronological age and developmental age, and the incongruence between and among an individual assessed on several developmental continua. Many refugee youth from Southeast Asia are in violation of the sociocultural normative "social schedule" of personal and social development. They are chronologically one age and developmentally another age because they have not had the opportunity to master the appropriate "developmental tasks." This is a priori, given the vast language, social and cultural differences between their ethnic world and ours. This incongruence is surely the source of much confusion and tension. For example, the schools try to teach older adolescents information and social norms learned by native children.

Many of these youth may be developmentally a-synchronous in that their bio-psycho-social development occurs at different rates. For example, they may have adult bodies, with cognitive development at the level of pre-formal reasoning when one has difficulty understanding concepts such as future and probability.

The Office of Refugee Resettlement's Statement of Work sits precisely on the issue of personal future, educationally, occupationally and economically. It is here precisely where are joined personal development, personality, social norms of the host country, and ethnic culture.

The Future: Aspirations and Expectations about Education and Employment

Adolescence and youth are invented social ideas. The study of adolescents and youth followed these ideas by stressing this as a time or stage of life in between childhood and adulthood, a time of consolidation or orientation forward to the future, and to the real life of being an adult. Hence, there is a long tradition of studies and discussion about adolescence as the time of preparation and about adolescents' conceptions of the future. (None of this is reviewed here.) In the context of that work, it can be said that American adults expect adolescents and youth to think about "what they want to be when they grow up," and to have more or less clear plans for their continued education and later employment with the completion of their junior or senior year of high school. Not to think and plan and worry about this is a sign of "immaturity" or "irresponsibility" or personal troubles. While there is great public recognition of the role of peers in the lives of adolescents, the future is a private decision arrived at after discussion with friends, advisers, and--perhaps most crucially--parents.

What is "the future," for all practical purposes? It is a statement in the present about later which has a "sufficient sense of reality to motivate behavior." Consequently, the future is a way of talking about the self using the public language of school and work. Thus, a person's discussion about his future is indicative of his socialization into the adolescent role. From another perspective, the future is simply the answer given in response to the question, "What do you want to be (or to do)?" which uses a situationally appropriate "language of motives." Cultures have biographies and there are cultural ways of thinking about the future as well as sociocultural options for the future. Using a cognitive developmental perspective, the future is understood differently by those with different capabilities to reason abstractly. Thus, there are individual differences in the capacity to understand the adult model of near and distant future. Taken together, the future is a personal construction using a public vocabulary which motivates present behavior.

There are distinct social patterns in the clarity, object, and potency for present behavior of adolescent and youth aspirations for school and work. These vary by social class, ethnicity, religion, family size, and the like. Hence, to understand the youth's educational and occupational aspirations, one should compare answers across ethnic lines. This is not done. But the questions lurk in the following text: "How do the responses of refugee adolescents compare to those of indigenous youth?" If they are similar, what does that tell us? And if they differ, what do we know then? How much confidence should we have in the youth's answers since we do not have a history of their success in the United States.?

In our culture, we are limited to understanding the future as following the present and open to our construction. Hence, a study of the present is the only way to approach the future. So it is that we study aspirations for a clue to possible future behavior. This is how we are said to build science (and prediction) and this is the most reasonable way to develop public policy.

Ethnicity

Our perspective is like a single lens reflex camera. At the lens setting f1.4, the foreground is clearly in focus and the background is fuzzy. First youth-ness was in focus and ethnicity was in the background. Now we shift to emphasizing ethnicity and move youth to the hazy backdrop.

The ideas of one's future, one's educational plans, one's occupational goals, and one's personal expectations of success are culture-bound in that one's vocabulary of words, ideas, and images, indeed, one's very sense of "future" is learned. How one thinks about these ideas as well as what one thinks about them is social and cultural, as well as private, personal and psychological. Hence, the caution is not to assume that the cultural meanings and ways of understanding these issues as adolescents and youth are universal; others may have different approaches, different meanings, and different logic. Thus, many youth do not think about the distant future; rather, tomorrow or next week or November is their future reference point. So it is that some youth believe that their parents will work things out for them or that they will have good luck or not have to make or keep plans; or that God will determine their future and their own efforts are needless. Or that prayer alone will help them become economically self-sufficient.

If the future is a complex idea for many young, middle, or older adolescents and youth, it is even more complex to those who grew up in an ethnic culture geographically and culturally far away from mainstream American life. In this study, some Southeast Asian youth are Americans "for all practical purposes," having been here all but two or three years of their life, while others who have just arrived are "foreigners." In between are those who have been here five to ten years. They live in both ethnic worlds. And even those who have been here all or most of their lives must be understood as living in both an idealized ethnic culture which is ideational (and exists now only in the mind), and the real, ever changing culture of their ethnic day-to-day life.

On Questions and Answers

Being a refugee means in part that one may have to learn new ways of thinking about oneself, one's place in his/her family, one's private as well as social responsibilities towards a variety of others, one's rights in relation to others, and all the rest of what is called "socialization" into the role of refugee. That is, one has to confront other's expectations of oneself as a refugee, as a youth who is a refugee and as a refugee who is a youth. One set of cultural norms has to do with the query, the place of questions and answers in school, in everyday life with those from outside the ethnic community. Americans ask and expect answers to all kinds of personal questions, and they often ask these in front of other people who can hear the answers. Second, Americans expect that one will have an answer to all of

their questions. They assume that it is appropriate to ask, that one will answer, and that one's answer may or may not be a true response. What is important is that one answers. For Americans, one does not question another as a way to show respect and to learn wisdom. One simply asks as a way to start and keep a conversation going. Learning about how Americans use queries is one part of learning to be a refugee and to succeed in America.

All of these get far more complex in the context of social science research in which a cultural understanding comes into play. One is expected to answer a researcher's question and to do so honestly, with the knowledge that the interview event will pass and be of no lasting effect on questioner or respondent. The "information" collected is not passed to government officials, to teachers or to one's parents. All of these, too, get far more complex.

The crucial and simple point is that refugee youth with or without camp experience have to learn about queries and the various ways these are used in everyday American life, including school and social research interviews.

Add to this discussion questions about one's future, and the other complexities of how one decides on the validity of the youth data becomes clear: the very topic, the future, the social institution of research, and the research interview may all be strange, at least unclear. Hence, to ask about the future is to hear about the future as presented during the interview to an outside researcher. The whole process of research depends on the respondent's understanding of the word "future", his having an idea about his own possibilities; his willingness to talk to an interviewer about this idea; his willingness to talk about the future within hearing of his ethnic peers, and the like. (This is more than typical peer group hassling, it is related to the ethnic group stratification, mobility, social control, and the like.)

All of the Southeast Asian communities studied had a concept of future in their language. There were language differences between communities in reference to aspirations, expectations, and one's ability to bring about his/her future. Minnesota values stress individual achievement as opposed to family or group achievement, while the Southeast Asian communities do not separate the individual from his context, the family, and the larger ethnic community. Hence, the very research questions about individual goals and plans is in tension with Southeast Asian ethnic social values.

Comparing Refugee and Indigenous Youth

The Statement of Work did not call for a comparison between the Southeast Asian and indigenous American youth (nor did it ask for comparisons among the different groups of refugee youth). Hence, this is not done. Yet it is important for policy and program development to be aware constantly that these youth must be understood as youth and as refugee youth and as members of a special cultural community. Policy and program should have multiple bases and it is not clear on its face that policy and programs for youth are more effective if youth are conceptualized as refugees than if the policy is formulated within a Western youth development model. It may be that the policy goals of enhancing effective <u>adult</u> employment and economic status can be achieved by supporting programs of positive youth development within and/or across ethnic boundaries.

Awareness of these issues may be a major contribution of this year-long inquiry.

On Adolescence in Southeast Asian Cultures

A youth development perspective could start with the very ideas of "adolescence" and "youth" by placing these within the culture of origin and then within current refugee culture. This is not done nor was it required for the Statement of Work. It is a subject of great importance to scholars and policy makers who would understand normal growth and development from childhood to old age, and the times and points of vulnerability and relative high risk to social and psychological morbidity. This would be a solid base for designing (and evaluating) social interventions.

Becoming Adult in a Changing Society

More than a title of a recent report by Coleman & Husen (Centre for Educational Research and Innovation, Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, Paris: 1985), this is the larger social context for understanding adolescence, youth, adolescence and youth, and adolescent and youth development. Questions about schooling and work are about growing-up and becoming adult. How refugee youth do this is comparable to how this is done by non-refugee youth, for both are preparing, at the same time, for the same general society, and thus are subjected, at a minimum, to similar social forces. Both are planning for an uncertain, ambiguous, unclear future, and have access in their attempt to very different resources. This is the context for the Statement of Work, and is the larger context for reading the report.

THE FINDINGS

The narratives which follow are the findings from the qualitative study of Southeast Asian refugee youth's aspirations and expectations about school and work. Each essay is about one ethnic community, with the flow of the text following the Primary Study Questions. The sequence is Vietnamese, Khmer, Lao, and Hmong. The reader is encouraged to pay attention particularly to differences both between ethnic communities and within each. A brief discussion of the findings follows the narratives.

The Vietnamese

Discussion

Overall, Vietnamese adolescents and youth present idealized American aspirations for education and occupation. In general, they aspire for higher education as a preparation for professional positions such as engineers and computer scientists in local corporations. For those whose hard work and constant studying cannot overcome their modest academic performance, aspirations are often toward small business ownership or the more highly paid technical trades. Very few adolescents (14-17 years old) and no youth (18-22 years old) were unclear about their educational and occupational aspirations, with the exception of recent arrivals (less than one year in the United States). Contrary to youth from the other ethnic communities, there seem to be almost no gender differences in aspirations or expectations for school or work for those with high academic performance. For those doing less well in school, clear gender differences are seen in occupation choice but no difference is seen in expectation of entering the work force.

The Vietnamese adolescents are focused on schoolwork during class and at home. They study after school in the afternoons and evenings and seem to participate little in after-school activities. For them "school is a job," and they develop strong work habits which are seen among Vietnamese university students who also study long hours, often in the library, so as to avoid the distractions of family life. In this case, they are supported by parents who "sacrifice" for their children, with the expectation that they will be supported in old age. Hence, in families where it is financially feasible, few adolescents or youth are pressured to hold after school or weekend part-time jobs, although some "help out" in family business and most have some summer work experience.

Vietnamese youth expect a lot of themselves. In school, they expect to do very well if they "work hard" and they expect to do well later in college and in their profession. Those long-term U.S. residents who do not intend to go to college expect to do well in business or the trades. Family attitudes and values support these aspirations and expectations of present and future success. There is a strong emphasis on "making it" with the clear expectation that you will be expected to contribute to both of your families--your own and your parents. In this way, parents "invest" in their children, for the career of their child determines in part the quality of their own later life. Allegiance is to yourself and then to your family.

This general picture does not include those who have come to Minnesota as adolescents or youth during the last two years. These are "greenhorns" to the Vietnamese community and are expected by it to do far less well than those who have been here longer, due to minimal language skills and inadequate educational preparation. It is these youth who could embarrass those who have been here longer and are doing well. The Vietnamese community is far less organized collectively than the Hmong community. Hence, there seems to be little ethnic community effort to facilitate the adjustment and integration of these late-comers. Compared to the early arrivals, these newcomers are very likely to do relatively poorly in school and hence, are likely to be at the lower end of the occupational ladder.

The number of early arrivals who have opened their own businesses--there are more than 80 Vietnamese restaurants in the Twin Cities--reduces the employment barriers for the new arrivals. These businesses make it possible for Vietnamese adults to enter the labor force before they acquire English skills. The businesses also provide summer and transitional jobs for youth and business experience for young family members. The visibility of these Vietnamese restaurants and grocery stores creates a positive image of refugee success; at the same time they offer employment to hundreds of Americans.

Many of the Vietnamese youth arrived in the United States before they were teenagers and have lived here longer than they lived in Vietnam. Hence, many are technically Americans. Yet all talk about themselves as Vietnamese, and they are identified as "Oriental" or as non-Americans by the larger community of non-Southeast Asians. For some, Vietnam is a place to return to (after the Communists are ousted by someone, not themselves). Thus, for many, their occupational choice may have been made with an eye to their place in a new, democratic Vietnam. These youth expect to be economically self-sufficient in both countries.

The difficulties faced by the newest refugees compared to earlier arrivals is exacerbated for the newest young arrivals who came here without parents. They will have to have the help of others in the Vietnamese community if they are to meet the criteria of success, as it is defined both by the Vietnamese community and the larger American society. Given the powerful support for educational and economic achievement among Vietnamese, these youth will likely become economically self-sufficient, but at a lower level than those who came earlier and had a partially or fully intact family.

Vietnamese youth aspire to professional employment in the larger community and most expect few barriers to their success in finding employment or in promotion. Some are more sensitive to issues of racism or discrimination, but they do not expect to be defeated by these factors in American society. Those who find English or academic skills a barrier to entering the professions aspire to careers in "business" or plan to attend vocational school. This suggests that the youth know something about different educational systems and how each is a pathway to a different occupation and life-style. Much of this knowledge resides in older brothers and sisters who are moving through these systems, as well as in the seemingly well-used school counselors. For all Vietnamese youth, education is an absolute value, with schooling seen as necessary and instrumental. There was almost no evidence of an interest in education for its own sake. In this case, these youth came close to their cohorts from the larger society.

These adolescents and youth usually have somewhat different educational and occupational aspirations than their parents--who may not have recovered their former professional status in Vietnam. Their aspirations for education

and occupations go beyond what their parents have achieved in this country, and they expect to achieve these with relatively little difficulty. The majority of the college youth held aspirations to become a professional in a technical science field. Compared to their parents, these youth expect far fewer difficulties in finding desirable jobs.

Vietnamese youth are expected to study after school and in the evenings. In the Vietnamese home we visited, there were strict rules posted regulating study time, telephone use, and housework. A few suburban youth declined to be interviewed because it would cut into their study time, and one boy was summoned home by his mother in the early evening because she felt he was spending too much time away from his books. Ideally, the youth work only during the summer break. In reality, some youth help in the family businesses, but even then they try to study. It is not uncommon to visit a local Vietnamese restaurant and pay the bill to a fourteen year old who is sitting at the cash register studying.

This picture is not true for Vietnamese-Americans in foster homes or without immediate families. These youth likely work after school, usually in the fast-food industry.

Most of the special enhancement programs for refugee and minority youth are for those with excellent to superior grades. There is a clear need for such programs for the average student. Special support programs exist also for those doing poorly, and again the average student is excluded. Some Vietnamese youth applied to the programs for superior students at the University and were accepted. Programs to expand occupational and vocational awareness seem absent.

Vietnamese youth believe that they can do well and are doing well in school. Education, that is, schooling, is a basic value and school is necessary as a means of economic success. These youth use the larger Minnesota Caucasian community as a reference group and do not compare themselves to other Southeast Asian youth. These youth see themselves as controlling their own educational and occupational destiny and as manipulators within their own worlds. Compared to other Southeast Asian youth, they are less dependent on social brokers within or outside the Vietnamese community (e.g. social welfare workers).

In Minneapolis, the school system seems to have responded to the Vietnamese youth's high expectations for themselves. Southeast Asian youth enrolled in bilingual programs are segregated by ethnic group. The Vietnamese attend a school from which 80 percent of the students go on to college, while the Hmong and Lao bilingual programs are located in high schools in blue-collar neighborhoods with stronger orientations toward vocational training.

The Vietnamese youth hold personal and social values of achievement congruent to those of their parents and other adults in their community.

Vietnamese families are willing to contribute what they can afford to their children's education with the expectation that this investment will pay dividends in their old age. Parents mortgage their present for their children's future (and in this way, their own). Youth study so as to get a good job, that is, a professional career. This will allow marriage, kids, a house, good furniture and electronic equipment, and the like, and then the ability to support one's parents. Individual and familial self-sufficiency are values and personal goals.

Refugee adolescents and youth use their extended families to learn about how the world works, with the older siblings, rather than the parents, teaching the younger ones about the American educational system. Second as a

teacher is the peer group and then one's formal school adviser. Theirs is a family-centered system in which larger ethnic community groups, associations, and churches play a secondary role. Larger trends, values, and institutions such as nationalism, the politics of the Vietnam War, or the like, were not presented as being crucial to the day-to-day effort to succeed in school. It appears that all children within a family will be supported in the effort to become educated, and to do their best, regardless of gender or intellectual abilities.

These youth see their future as bright, as good as their current academic performance and their expected performance in advanced schooling, university or vocational. If one does well now, the future will come, and one will do well then. One expects socioeconomic mobility; to be Vietnamese is to do well.

These youth will marry, have children, (fewer than their parents), a home and all the furnishings. They will live the American Dream as Vietnamese in America, not as Americans who are Vietnamese. They will belong to a church and attend it. They will eat Vietnamese food and pizza. They will raise kids who will do well in America. Their Vietnamese identity will be in their language, food, family and memory of Vietnam. Family comes before community and cultural identity and its sources are found therein.

Personal effort leads to success; economic self-sufficiency is taken for granted. Absolutely basic to success is English language mastery. Any barriers are psychological, they say. Observers are far more likely to see barriers and interpret these as institutional, such as racism, the mal-integration between school and work, the labor market, and the like.

The Vietnamese use the formal social brokers in the school, and informally, use their relatives and age-peers. They use these social brokers in a way that does not foster their own dependence upon them. For them, programs are opportunities that are instrumental to the achievement of personal goals; programs are not a way of life. This orientation to the use of public bureaucracies may be a residual of their experience with the French colonial government. Personal role models for these adolescents were relatives and older siblings of their friends.

Overall, the adolescents and youth we interviewed were among the most successful in the Vietnamese community, itself a group characterized by comparatively high success to other Southeast Asian groups. We visited also those who were doing average work and with those--almost always very recent arrivals--who had not yet mastered more than the basics of spoken English. Our findings and conclusions may be biased in the direction of higher success than is typical of the larger Vietnamese youth community. However, this is a distortion of degree, not of kind. Overall, these adolescents and youth spoke as reflected in our text. These youth will do comparatively well--they will achieve economic self-sufficiency at a higher rate than other Southeast Asian youth, and overall, will be at a higher socioeconomic level than the youth in other Southeast Asian ethnic communities. This is so particularly for the girls and young women. For those at the lower end of the scales for educational and occupational success,those Vietnamese doing less well compared to other Vietnamese, will do relatively better than those other Southeast Asian youth doing less well than their agemates in their own ethnic communities.

A clear difference between these and other Southeast Asian youth is that the Vietnamese will continue to try to succeed socioeconomically. There will be few of these youth immobilized or otherwise constrained by psychological tensions or massively disrupted family life. They seem able to cope with the

stress imposed on them by their own and their families' high ambitions. Those currently in foster care will do less well, for family cohesion and support are crucial for individual success. Of particular concern are Amerasians, who have much more complex bonds to both the American and Vietnamese communities to decipher than do other Vietnamese refugees.

The prognosis for later arrivals, particularly those who came without immediate family members, is far less good than the prognosis for those Vietnamese refugee youth who arrived in the mid to late '70s. They will likely have a harder time in school, be less successful, and hence, achieve relatively less in terms of occupational status. Their income could, but need not, reflect this due to the exigencies of the labor market, the cost of education, and the like. The desire to remain living with parents and to contribute to the parents' support seemed less strong in this group. These youth are more likely than earlier arrivals to become involved in Vietnamese and larger community criminal subcultures, we reason, but we have no data about this.

The Vietnamese are a major contributor to the local image of the successful Southeast Asian refugee, (that is, "Latest Refugees Find Success in Schools, Minneapolis Tribune, November 17, 1986, p.13A). To many, Southeast Asian means Vietnamese; and the success of these youth reflects well on their own ethnic group and on Southeast Asian youth in general, while at the same time, distracting attention from the average youth and for the needs of those doing relatively poorly. Since everybody loves a success story, if not the person who is successful, it is likely that attention will continue to be focused on the most successful youth, most of whom are Vietnamese. Public and private social agencies, mutual assistance associations, churches and citizen groups apply pressure for this focus to be taken. The publicity given to these youth is heartening to the American adults involved in refugee resettlement and is used to promote Minnesota's self-concept as a state where everyone has a fair chance for personal success. Educators in particular can point to this as proof of their assertion that personal and economic success is attendant upon school success and that our schools are doing well.

The Vietnamese compare themselves to each other and to the larger Minnesota community; to them, other Southeast Asians are not as important. The Vietnamese as a group are doing well compared to Caucasians and to local native Blacks, Hispanics, and Native Americans. Other Southeast Asian groups compare themselves to the Vietnamese and often come up short. This no doubt will continue, and such comparatively poor showing could lead to anti-Vietnamese feelings and actions. Those Vietnamese doing relatively poorly could suffer because it is they who will be easiest to find and abuse. The others are living in the suburbs working and studying.

Social theory predicts that when aspirations are high and the means to achieve these are limited, social deviancy occurs. So it may be with those Vietnamese youth who hold high goals of personal success, fostered by the success of their peers, but have limited school achievement. The desire for the materialistic trappings of success may lead some youth into juvenile delinquency and adult crime, particularly for those youth detached from the social control of family either by physical separation or alienation. Recent public reports of Vietnamese youth gangs in California and in Canada and the emergence of the Vietnamese in the illegal drug enterprise may suggest alternative paths to socioeconomic status and success. This does not appear to be an issue in Minnesota.

The Interviews

We interviewed two distinct groups of Vietnamese youth: newly arrived youth whose asp'rations tended to be in the trades and college-bound or college youth who aspired toward the professions.

The story that was evaluated by the girls and young women was about a Vietnamese girl named Mai, whose family sold its business in Vietnam in order to escape. Mai arrives in the United States at age 17. She takes fairly simple courses and gets B's and C's. She goes to vocational school and works two jobs to get ahead. She marries and gets pregnant at age 23. We defined Mai as moderately successful.

One college-bound group of four also judged a story of a Vietnamese woman whom our Vietnamese adult informant termed unsuccessful. Kim comes to the United States without her parents. She does well in school, marries right after high school, and attends the University at the same time she is working. She drops out in her sophomore year after she becomes pregnant.

The reactions to the stories showed that the youth felt you must take your life into your own hands and take all necessary steps to be successful. This conviction was especially evident in the four college-bound and five college students, but also evident in a group of fourteen high-school-age recent arrivals. Several in the college-bound group said that Mai did not take the courses she needed to get ahead. At least one believed she was not learning English because she was avoiding learning it by taking easy classes. The college students felt that she should embrace the opportunity for a good education and take more academic courses in science, foreign languages, math, etc., and have a tutor help her with her English. They agreed, however, that learning English was hard.

All the female college students had one or both parents working--in a factory or a store, or as a teacher or an electrical engineer. Most of the students had also done some kind of work already: babysitting, working at discount stores or fast food restaurants, doing office work, or holding a student job as a lab technician. One student remarked that the older Vietnamese kids might enter the labor force right after high school to help out the family, but "the middle ones have more chance for a better education."

Some moderation in work was desirable to most of the college students. The notion that both Mai and her husband would work two jobs did not appeal to them. "Money is important, but it's not good to forsake the family for money," an 18-year-old freshman studying to be an engineer said.

The Vietnamese did not seem to feel any pressure either to get married or to stop living with their parents. Some objected to a line in the story that read, "She could save some money because she lived with her parents." "I'll stay with my parents because I want to, not because of money-saving," the 18-year-old freshman said.

The minimum age suggested for a woman to marry was 25, with one of the five college students interviewed preferring 26 to 30. In regard to having children, one wrote that this should be postponed until a few years after marriage. "Starting a family should be in the early 30's," a 19-year-old chemistry major remarked.

The college-bound students who read Kim's story echoed the concerns of the college students about early marriage and childbearing. "She should have waited to get married after she graduated from college and knew what her career would be," a 14-year-old who'd been in the United States 11 years commented. "She shouldn't have gotten pregnant until she graduated from

college and raised enough money to have a baby. She should have gotten a job that she's satisfied with first and then have a baby after." Her sentiments were echoed by those in other interview groups. One remarked that the social trend now for Vietnamese girls was to become "an independent woman" first, and get married later.

Notable here was that these girls had a strong sense of self-determination. When asked, "Well, what if Mai just got pregnant?" they reiterated: "She shouldn't get pregnant." Without overtly mentioning birth control, they expressed the belief that pregnancy is not just something that happens to you; it is a matter of the woman's choice. This stands in stark contrast to the Hmong girls, who considered family size much more a matter of chance.

The college-bound and college students expected to be successful; their success and the success of other early arrivals impose certain expectations on the more recent arrivals. "Newcomers are pressured to get established economically as well as the earlier ones," said a 21-year-old senior in chemistry. "So they would go to vo-tech to get jobs faster."

The later arrivals, high school students who had been in the United States from three months to four years, did not share all of the values of the college-bound and college students. They seemed more willing to move out of the family home after high school. "I want to move out and enjoy my life," said a 14-year-old girl who had lived in the United States for four years.

"My parents are too old. It would be more fun to live on my own," said a 17-year-old.

Those who identified their parents' occupations listed them as "sewing," "cleaning up the building in downtown," factory work, and staying home to take care of the children.

Some of the youth had already held jobs, usually in child care or the fast food industry. A 17-year-old who worked as a babysitter used her money to help her mother pay the rent, but kept some of her income for herself, too. "I try to study, but didn't understand much English to do work," wrote one girl, who opted to attend summer school. After high school, the youth expected to go to work, to English classes for adults, vocational school, or college. (Four of the fourteen expressed interest in college.) "I will go to vocational school because I don't think I have enough ability to go to college," said a 17-year-old.

Hard work is expected. Most felt comfortable with the husband and wife both working two jobs. One would have reduced the husband's workload to one job, while two respondents would have increased it to three.

Career goals that were mentioned were accountant, math teacher, teacher, and beautician.

No one mentioned a marriage age of less than 23. Most thought ages 24 to 26 were appropriate, while one preferred 35 and another 40. Most of those who expressed a desired number of children wanted two, while one wanted four.

Of the 28 Vietnamese males we interviewed, seven were college students and the rest high school students at one urban and two suburban high schools, many of whom had been in the United States less than three years. Two of the students were Amerasians living in a foster home.

They evaluated a story about Son, who came to the United States at age 17, was an average student, and became an electrician by going to vocational school.

This story fit closely with the ideals of a number of the high school students, who had aspirations at a similar level. Job goals included car

mechanic (mentioned by four students), welder, a career in the Navy, machinist, electrician, computer-related work, and "working in the sports area." Those who hoped to go to college aspired to the professions of lawyer, electronics engineer, engineer, teacher, history teacher, and Catholic priest.

In general, the students seemed to have a realistic idea of their own abilities. Many of the recent arrivals and a few who had been in the United States several years rated themselves as average students. Only a few rated themselves as doing better academically than Son. Average academic performance did not hinder the students from planning to have careers with good incomes, and most of the trades they chose could bring an income that would accommodate middle-class dreams.

One problem that a primarily college-bound group of high school students found with the story was that Son arrived in the United States at an awkward age. "It's better to be younger when you come here," said a 15-year-old. "It's better to be 12 than 17. He won't understand English much or the way of life."

"The older you are, the harder it is to change," commented a 16-year-old.

"Fourteen would be OK. Then he has experience in Vietnam and here. Like me, I came here when I was 5, and I don't know what Vietnam is like," said another.

Son's difficulty with school elicited real-life comparisons. "Math in Vietnam is harder, but (new arrivals) can't be in a high class in math because they can't understand the terms. I have a friend in my algebra class and he's calculus-level, but his English isn't good. Also, he does it the French way and the teacher marks it wrong," a 16-year-old who has been in the United States twelve years said. Another interviewee observed that Son must be trying pretty hard because he was getting B's and C's even though he didn't understand the language.

Some college students were dubious that Son could get a job doing electrical work during the summers, and felt a job as a restaurant busboy or a worker at a fast-food restaurant would be more likely to be offered and mastered by someone with limited English. Others observed that the money Son earned must go to help his family, and he would probably have to work year-round, not just in the summer.

But the high school students had high hopes for Son's future. "I've heard of a lot of Vietnamese who started out in the pit and work their way up to a high level and get famous. If he stays in the business, he'll work his way up to a higher position."

A 16-year-old suggested that the story should end with Son getting his own business repairing televisions, but another disagreed.

"He could be his own boss but it might take a while; it might take five years. He might not want to. It's too much to worry about."

"I disagree," said the boy who had suggested business ownership. "Because I tutor (new arrivals). Most are very ambitious. They want to open their own store because everyone tried to do that in Vietnam. The rich get richer and the poor stay poor."

This last boy described himself as "more ambitious" than his friends because of "how I'm brought up. You must put all your effort into it. I must do it for the family. If I were by myself, I might work in any job, as long as it was easy." Later he added: "When I grow up, I want to support my parents because they supported me."

Another 16-year-old wished to be a World History teacher because of a World History teacher in another state whom he described as "a role model."

"Not in history!" objected a friend who aspired to be an engineer. "Everyone hates the subject. And students are such smart-mouths."

The college students who responded to the story discussed some of the larger issues related to it. They were divided in whether their career goals should come before all else, in whether they should hope to return to a peaceful Vietnam, in whether racism would hold them back, and in whether Americanization was harming their cultural identity.

"I'm not interested in competing and spending thirty years doing the same job. You need to force yourself to like it in order to earn money," said a 23-year-old math major. He was thinking about traveling a while, then going into teaching because you "give your ideas and it's not too laborious." He hoped to find himself in a position "where you don't need a lot of money."

"The United States is a country of opportunity; the main emphasis is on money. The more you've been here, you lose the idea of serving people," said a college senior.

Another cited the considerable amount of discrimination and prejudice as a reason many Vietnamese go into engineering. "We tend to study engineering due to egotism; we don't want others to look down on the Vietnamese. In order to have a position (in American society), we need to be educated."

A 24-year-old senior felt that racism was institutionalized in the American school system, that educators had not taken into account that the Vietnamese "study differently" from Americans, and that professors were more willing to help American students than Vietnamese. However, he believed that racism resided in individuals more than in the society as a whole.

A competitive drive strongly fostered by the high standards of their parents was what kept these college students going, in spite of obstacles and occasional misgivings. Going to college for engineering was an alternative to fighting in the Army in Vietnam, and younger kids continue to pursue that path because of the pressure of the older generation, said a 21-year-old.

Some in this group said they considered returning to Vietnam to help their country a possibility, if the political situation changes, but they don't expect those younger than they, whose memories of Vietnam are less clear, to have the same dream.

Discussion

The Khmer youth of Cambodia must be understood as two distinct populations: those who arrived in the United States without close family members and those who came with some vestiges of their immediate and/or extended families. In general, the Khmer youth not yet of college age or not attending college were relatively unclear about their personal educational and occupational futures. Non-college youth generally spoke of vocational aspirations, with specific examples given for training in local vocational-technical institutes (e.g. automotive technician, machinist) or on the job (e.g. police, military). College youth expressed a wide range of professional interests, including high technology engineering (e.g. computers), architecture, politics, and law. There was interest expressed also in the human services.

Overall, all Khmer adolescents and youth seem to be suffering the results of the war, moreso than youth in other Southeast Asian ethnic communities. Symptoms associated with having suffered trauma seem almost common among them, as is a pervasive lack of confidence in themselves or in the future. They are far more likely to be relatively passive in the search for and use of social brokers, but are responsive when approached by these human services workers, indigenous and outsiders. These youth have a relatively poor understanding of our occupational structure and its relations to our educational system. These patterns are more pronounced among the youth detached from their immediate families, but occur among most youth interviewed. It is expected that there is in the Khmer community a relatively high endemic rate of personal troubles related to their horrific war experience.

Among adolescents and youth who arrived with some family, there are gender differences in educational and occupational aspirations. Girls and young women lack personal confidence and a sense of personal efficacy in the present and over the future. They are poorly informed about educational and occupational possibilities, lacking a basic vocabulary of words, concepts, and ideas about the world of work. They aspire for employment as a general activity, not to a particular occupation. Emphasis is put on the social career of school, work, and marriage rather than on any combination of marriage and an occupational career. These youth are expected to contribute to their family directly by nurturing, that is, taking care of the family unit and taking on the traditional role of women.

Boys and young men seem ungrounded in contemporary Minnesota options of school and work. They have aspirations but little expectations of success at these -- "I would like to do x but I don't know if it will work. It probably won't." This attitude fits with the norm proscribing bragging and commitment of the occupational self in front of others, but it appears to be more than this. It is experienced, we believe, as an existential condition of being unclear, unknowing, unwilling to try, and being afraid -- the debility caused by war. These youth oriented to holding a job as a practical consideration, necessary for financial support, rather than to an occupational plan that would bring them step by step to professional positions of prestige and personal fulfillment. They concentrate on the immediate needs of the present, not the long-term prospects for their future.

"What can I get?" is the youth's question about their life's work; they don't ask about what could be. For these boys and girls, young men and women, the barriers to their futures are psychological first rather than sociological. They seemingly can not utilize effectively existing opportunity structures in school, between school and work, or between and among school and work.

These youth assess themselves as being behind and unable to catch up. They compare themselves to Caucasian-Americans and the Vietnamese and find themselves wanting. For them, there is insufficient time to catch up and to prepare for American life. The dangers of this becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy are obvious.

Unlike the Vietnamese with their family support or the Hmong with their family and communal infrastructures, there are limited ethnic community support structures for the Khmer youth. There is no small business subculture, few advanced relatives to advise about school and work and few ethnic community groups organized to provide guidance. Available are the public and voluntary human services and their few Khmer staff. Without these youth workers or school staff, these youth would have only tenuous ties to the larger worlds of school and work. How one gets a job is unclear to the youth.

Khmer youth want part-time and summer jobs, and some have these, like doing newspaper delivery and working in fast-food restaurants. Girls, who play the traditional female role in the home, seem to give their money to the family, while boys use theirs for their personal needs, in this way lessening the strain on the family budget. The self and the family are one, so that financial interdependence is basic. Hence, youth are active participants in their family's attempt at economic self-sufficiency.

The war is still alive in these youth. So too is the refugee camp. In this one they learned about the meaninglessness of planning more than short-term and that the educated were slaughtered. In the camps, they learned how to be helped by outsiders, how to be a human services client. Youth workers and other social brokers are accepted as necessary, but the youth are relatively passive in searching for or asking for help. However, help is accepted.

Cultural identity for the Khmer youth means a common memory of war and refugee camps, one's language and Khmer dance, literature and food. Material items place on the walls of one's home are a show of cultural identity; so too are the traditions which must not be forgotten. Above this is the same question: "How can I make it in America?"

To be a victim does not mean necessarily to be helpless. Khmer youth do not see themselves as helpless or believe that they are helpless. Yes, they have much against them, but they will, as they must, keep going. They are somewhat immobilized, surely somewhat dependent upon human services, but many have hope. Even underdogs succeed. Proof is found in the Khmer youth workers who serve as role models and who exhort these youth to study and succeed.

The Khmer, unlike the other Southeast Asian youth, seem less linear or more hermeneutical and realistic in their thinking. They seem more interested in helping others in their community as human services workers than the youth of the other ethnic groups. More than anything, many of these youth seem almost dazed and because of this, appear relatively unfocused in their aspiration and actions. Whereas in the Vietnamese and Laotian communities, those who are now adolescents will do better than their parents, among the Khmer, there are relatively few parents. The absence of fathers is particularly noteworthy; 82 percent of welfare-dependent Cambodian families in Hennepin

County are female-headed. Khmer youth may succeed at about the same rate as the adults in the other Southeast Asian communities. They are the Khmer transitional generation.

A culture supporting intellectual and cultural achievements was violently disrupted when those who were educated and talented were destroyed. These Khmer adolescents and youth have the possibility of discovery and building upon these sociocultural sources of intellectual and occupational achievement, and in this way, revitalizing their culture and stimulating themselves. Whether they can do this without long-term supportive human services is the question. It is not worth risking a negative answer.

In every way, it is crucial to distinguish in public expectations between the several Southeast Asians ethnic communities. This is so particularly for the Khmer, who carry the burden of their recent history and are without the many personal, familial, and communal structures and resources necessary for shouldering many expectations of successful modern life in Minnesota. They need time and help.

The Interviews

The interviews with Khmer youth revealed the youth's uncertainty about their future, as well as their attachment to certain ideals and traditions of Cambodian life.

We talked to two groups of girls and young women, one a high school English as a second language class and the other a group of young women who had come to the United States without their parents. An 18-year-old in the high school class was married; the others were single.

The story they evaluated was that of Waliwon, who lost her family in Cambodia, lived in an American foster home, moved out on her own, got a job and went to junior college.

The girls who were detached from their immediate families talked about the instability of their foster home life. Rather than attempt to resolve conflicts that arose in the homes where they were placed, some of the girls chose to move when there were problems: for example, other foster children they couldn't get along with in an American foster home or not enough freedom in a Cambodian foster home. But they hoped to stay with their foster family or relatives if invited to do so after high school. Most disagreed with Waliwon's decision to live with two other Cambodian girls, saying that degree of independence would give her a bad reputation.

All planned to work in the future. "I will go to work after school," said a 23-year-old high school senior. "I like money, but I don't like school. I would like to save money and travel."

"College is too hard so I would go to Vo-Tech, take courses in accounting, and then work," said a 20-year-old high school sophomore.

A 17-year-old sophomore wanted to "become a Marine and a doctor. I would spend half-time in the Marines and half-time in school. The Marines would pay for my college."

This girl said she was not interested in children and would not like to marry. The others expressed interest in marriage, and most thought 18 to 25 years was a good marriage age.

The young women were anxious about their futures; one said she woke up at night and worried about having no definite future; if she had a family it would be different. They felt put down by Americans and were always looking

for a different school or different family, where they would feel wanted. They were confused about their Cambodian identity; they were angry about the rigidity of the culture and felt out of place in both their own community and the American community.

The other female high school students echoed some of the concerns of the girls living in foster homes. Many had lost immediate family members in Cambodia, and they felt insecure about their futures in the United States. They felt Americans had a much stronger sense of direction than they did.

"Americans are rude," said one. "They don't let us speak our own language."

Some also complained that their parents were too traditional or strict. "If you don't study, you get the bamboo stick," said one.

"Girls must study and do housework. Boys don't do housework," said another.

Uncertainty about the future derived in part from financial insecurity (no means to pay for education) and from uncertainty about what they were able to achieve. Career goals mentioned were registered nurse, nursing assistant, secretary, or law. Several mentioned that their mothers' wishes were influential in career choice. The young women felt pressured to fill the traditional Cambodian woman's role of helping people. "Girls help people and boys can do what they want. Boys need to be smarter," said a 17-year-old who has been in the United States four and a half years.

"Men have to be smarter than women to support a family," a 16-year-old said. This girl thought it would be a good idea for husband and wife to work alternate shifts so someone would be home with the children at all times. The girls expected that the youngest in the family would stay home to take care of the parents.

The Khmer youth felt they were anchored in the Cambodian community, but recognized that there is a lot of conflict in that community because of the political upheaval and division that took place in Cambodia. One girl didn't know whether she wanted to get involved with the Cambodian community as an adult "because the Cambodian adults don't get along well with each other."

We talked to three groups of Khmer boys and young men. One group consisted of boys detached from their immediate families; one was a social group living in a public housing project, and another was an English as a second language high school class.

The story that the male youth evaluated was about Van, whose parents are factory workers. He gets a job in electronics assembly, marries at age 20, and stays out of trouble.

The youth generally thought that Van's parents were more successful than their own. They thought it unlikely that parents could get factory jobs. "They can't find easy jobs when they first come," said a 16-year-old. "Factories don't take unskilled workers. Plus, they don't speak English."

A few noted that there may be exceptions in families with previous training, in which both parents work. But a new car and a new house were out of reach for most. "My mother was on A.F.D.C.," one wrote on his story sheet. "Had no new car or new house."

Some rated themselves as higher and others lower than Van in academic abilities, although most considered themselves average. English, math, and science were mentioned as difficult subjects.

The youth stated various goals for post-high school. One wanted to get a job right away so he could marry. But several objected that it was unrealistic for Van to get a job right after high school, and he needed to develop

skills first by going to college or vocational school. The youth saw vocational school, the military, community college, or the university as ways of getting necessary skills. As career goals, they mentioned welding, the Army, being a police officer, working in an auto body shop, teacher, auto mechanic, electrical engineer, laboratory technician, computer programmer, and artist. One wrote that he would take "any job avaible to me."

Pessimism was readily expressed. "I want to be a policeman, but I don't think so because of my English ability," said a 16-year-old who had been in the United States one year.

"We won't be lawyers because we're not that smart," said a 17-year-old.

"We have problems with English," a 19-year-old agreed.

"I want to go to college, but I don't know if I will get in. I don't know what I want to study. If I can't get into college, I will go to votech," said an 18-year-old.

All those who aspired to go to four-year colleges rated themselves as above average students.

"I think I can get a high education in the United States and find a high-paying job," one such youth said. "I feel confident that I can." Another student who wanted to go to college thought age 20 was too young to marry. "I want to finish college and find a good job first." Many others also believed Van and his wife were too young to marry and should have postponed marriage to their mid-twenties.

The students did not believe they would forsake their Cambodian heritage, no matter what their ambitions are. "A lot of Cambodians think about Cambodian culture: not just themselves but their community and people and country. They try to reach out for community service--not just live selfishly," a 20-year-old high school senior said. Some mentioned the importance of religion and said they don't want to forget about going to temple, even if they also attend a Christian church because their sponsors are Christian.

"In some things, they (Van and his wife) can act American, but they must keep their culture in their mind. They must act like Cambodians with their friends, or people will think they're strange," a 19-year-old observed. His peers agreed:

"You cannot forget your culture if you were born there."

"Your skin is different."

The youth speculated that the reason Van tried not to think about his country is so he wouldn't be sad. "I think about the past a lot," said a young man whose parents were killed in Cambodia. "All Asians try to help each other if they can...," said one young man, and another finished his sentence: "...because it's a foreign country."

Discussion

The Lao are the least recognized Southeast Asian group in Minnesota. With no group very widely understood by anyone except select service providers, this reflects a deep ignorance. Many Minnesotans are at least somewhat familiar with the Vietnamese because of the United States' lengthy military involvement in Vietnam, with the Khmer because of the film, "The Killing Fields," and with the Hmong because of wide publicity about their role in helping the CIA and their concentrated presence in urban neighborhoods. But the Lao remain enigmatic to most, and their qualifications as "refugees" are not clearly understood.

The Lao men who were resettled here were loyal to the Royal Lao Army (or had fathers who were loyal) and served that Army in alliance with the United States. Because of their military roles, many of the men were imprisoned in reeducation camps after 1975, from which they escaped to bring their families to "freedom," if confinement in Thai refugee camps can be so defined.

Although there is a Lao mutual assistance association in Minneapolis, the ethnic Lao are not a tightly knit community like the Laotian Hmong. In schools, neighborhoods, and employment, they are often mistaken for Hmong, which disturbs them because of the sense they have of being from a superior, more civilized culture. Ill feelings are exacerbated, in some cases, when they see themselves surpassed by an elite group of Hmong in education and employment. In Laos, the Hmong were the minority group; in Minnesota, the Hmong far outnumber the Lao, and the Lao have had to adjust to this reversal. Because there are so many more Hmong than Lao to be served, and because the educated Hmong speak Lao, while the educated Lao don't speak Hmong, the Hmong have been favored for work as interpreters and in the social services. These jobs are among the few entrees to the middle class for adult Laotian refugees.

Because of their looser community ties, the Lao have been willing to scatter into different Minnesota communities rather than concentrating so wholly in Minneapolis and St. Paul as the Minnesota Hmong have. The Lao live in the mid-sized towns of Worthington and St. Cloud, and in Minneapolis's southern suburbs, as well as in Minneapolis and St. Paul. Many of those who live in the inner city maintain the dream of moving to the suburbs to get their children away from what they see as the evil influences of city life: drugs, crime, loose morals, and indolence.

While the Minnesota Hmong community has some outstanding success stories, the Lao community overall has a much more stable pattern of employment, with a welfare dependency rate less than two-thirds that of the Hmong. Most of the Lao in Minnesota are from lowland urban areas of Laos, and they had at least several years of education, some of them completing high school and even going beyond. The Lao do not appear to have the high level of entrepreneurial spirit that the Vietnamese do, although a few do own small businesses; nor do they seem as loathe to start at the bottom of the ladder and work their way up, as the Hmong do. Everyone in the Hmong community knows of its most successful members; the Lao do not seem to be nearly as familiar with the educated members of their community who might serve as role models to the youth. This may be because academic achievement is not as great a novelty to the Lao.

Expectations that most Lao parents have for their teens is that they get some kind of vocational or community college training. The children tend not to do well enough in school to be likely candidates for college scholarships; a number of fathers see military service as a good alternative for these youth, with the possibility that the G.I. bill could later finance a college education.

The young Lao men we encountered had the most distinctive dress and hairstyles of any of the Southeast Asian youth. They had adopted a mild punk style that does not make them look aggressive but does assert their identity as different from that of their parents. In spite of a rebellious look, the Lao youth were polite and cooperative. An English as a second language teacher who works with the Lao believes that this punk look, characterized by torn jeans and leather, is an affordable way for the low-income youth to have style and set themselves apart. It is also a way for the youth to assert their freedom from the Communist regime in Laos, which strictly regulated dress and hairstyles. Their appearance may limit the types of jobs that will be offered to them in the short term.

While their style is imitative of that of American punks, the Lao youth do not appear to be in friendship groups with those Americans. Like the other Southeast Asians, they become Americanized by imitating American behavior and looks (as well as they can understand them) within their own ethnic group, not by becoming integrated into an American social group.

The Interviews

We interviewed the Lao youth at an urban high school and a suburban high school. We also interviewed some Lao males who attend a regular social gathering in Minneapolis.

The story we presented to the Lao girls and young women was based on information given us by a Lao woman who has been in the United States since 1975. It is about Anoulack, who gets divorced after a bad marriage, finds a good-paying job, and is able to live comfortably and independently on her salary. Two-thirds of the girls we interviewed had been in the United States only a year, and they were generally shocked by the story, exhibiting a vast difference in acculturation. They thought that Anoulack's dating would be considered like prostitution. "I know a woman who dates men," said an 18-year-old who felt Anoulack would have a bad reputation. "She had two kids and gave them to Americans for money. Older people don't like her."

The girls did not consider Anoulack's marriage unrealistic, but said that they planned to avoid any such marriage by making a thoughtful choice of a mate.

The girls were accepting of a marriage age younger than that preferred by the Vietnamese, but older than that accepted by the Hmong. They said a girl might marry between the ages of 14 and 16 if "she didn't listen to her parents" and (we might presume) got pregnant, but they regarded such a step unfavorably. They thought that 19 to 22 was a good age to marry for a young woman who wasn't planning to go to college. "We think about marriage but we have to control ourselves," said a 17-year-old girl. "We have to study and get a job first."

A few of the female students mentioned going to a community college or a four-year college, but showed some hesitation, adding "if I can do it."

"To get a better job, you need someone to help you, like a volunteer (English tutor)," a 17-year-old said.

The girls had career goals in the areas of computers, banking, accounting, interpreting, and teaching. One was resisting her parents' wish that she be a nurse or a doctor because she felt her patients would speak English too fast and she wouldn't understand them. Some said their career goals depended on their parents' or husbands' wishes, and others that their goals depended on their own desires. "Sometimes I care about what my parents think, but it's up to me," said a 17-year-old. The girls had a role model, a young Lao woman attending the University of Minnesota, but she had told them that the University was very difficult, making them feel more hesitant to give it a try.

All the girls stressed the importance of making money, reflecting an expectation that they would be self-sufficient. When they talked about higher aspirations, like buying a house, marrying a rich man, or being a doctor or interpreter, they amended, "It's just a dream."

In the male story, Bounchanh comes to the United States with his younger brothers and sisters as head of family. He doesn't do well in college, so he goes to vocational school, earns enough to buy a house, then marries and has four children.

The male students' responses to the story show that most believe that self-sufficiency should be acquired before marriage, and that this is mainly the responsibility of the male. While most are not confident of their ability to do well in college, they see other routes open to themselves and expect to become self-sufficient by learning a trade or office skill. They are ready to take the necessary steps to achieve this goal: vocational school, hard work, marriage to a spouse who would be able to work, late marriage, and relatively small family size.

The male students did not display much confidence in their academic performance and their ability to succeed at a college level, even if they could afford it. Vocational-technical school and the military were most often mentioned as a means to get job training. A frequently mentioned vocation was "machinist." Others had goals of becoming a cartoonist, photographer, electronics engineer, drafter, janitor, mechanic, computer-related worker, or electrician. The young men had dreams of being doctors, teachers, or interpreters, but saw these goals as only dreams.

"I wanted to get a good education in the U.S., so I can go in the Marine Corp and be a tough american soldier. I like working with my hands and body so I can be physically tough fighting man and get the higher rank to get the better pay rate to support my family. I would like to get married and have three kids," wrote a high school student. He was quite insistent on this goal, even though his pacifist teacher had been trying for some time to dissuade him.

No boy mentioned an age of marriage younger than 20, and one boy thought 42 was an ideal marriage age. The median age mentioned was 29. The age the boys wanted their mate to be was slightly younger. On the extremes, one boy mentioned the age 18 as ideal for a wife, while two mentioned the ages of 36 to 40. While the latter figures may appear exaggerated, they reflect a consciousness of the American ideal of postponing marriage until financial stability is achieved.

Among the boys, the largest desirable family size is five children, with most preferring two to four children.

Among the dreams for the Lao youth is the ideal of living in the suburbs "because they're quiet and peaceful and have more fresh air." Problems with living in the city included--for some--concern about their relations with American minority students and about their ability to control their tempers during confrontations.

"Those guys like to fight," said one teen.

"They treat us bad because we are aliens."

"They're jealous because we have a beautiful car."

Others said they got along OK with American students of all races. The teacher observed that her Lao students, in spite of how a few of them talked, did not get into fights with other students.

While they had developed loyalty to their high school, the students thought that their English learning was being inhibited by the clustering of Lao students at one city school. They thought they could learn more English if they had American friends, but found it hard to develop those friendships. They also felt reluctant to invite an American into their homes because the Americans might not understand their way of life. One young adult did not want an interviewer to come to his home because the place where he lived with his younger siblings was "so terrible."

Discussion

Hmong youth have special difficulties that must be regarded when determining their prospects for self-sufficiency. It appears that the Hmong community is at risk for splitting into two distinct social groups: the ambitious middle class and a welfare-dependent class that is estranged from American society socially, economically, politically, and culturally. Perceivable social stratification is already occurring, with certain Hmong individuals making significant achievements in education, employment, and home ownership, leaving others far behind them. In Minnesota, welfare dependency is higher among the Hmong than it is among any other refugee group--63 percent for the Hmong, compared to 38.2 percent for the Lao, 31.9 percent for the Vietnamese, 41.2 percent for Cambodians, and 5.5 percent for the general population. (It should be noted that a significant number of the welfare-dependent have a family member working part-time, so dependency rates should not be equated with unemployment in all cases.)

This high rate of welfare dependency can no longer be considered a transitional problem. In Hennepin County, the Hmong refugees no longer eligible for federal cash assistance who are on public assistance have been in this country, on average, for 75 months--compared to 61 months for Lao, and 46 months for Vietnamese and Cambodians. Twenty-seven percent of the Hmong families needing public assistance are female-headed, but most are intact.

So in studying Hmong youth, we must look not only at ethnicity but at the effects on the majority of the youth of growing up in a welfare-dependent family in a poor, urban neighborhood with high levels of crime and unemployment.

After speaking with almost fifty Hmong youth, the researchers concluded that the present generation of Hmong youth will be somewhat better off than their parents' generation in regard to employment and economic status, but will remain at high risk for being welfare-dependent. The upcoming generation will do "either better or worse" than their parents, observed a 15-year-old boy who is concerned about the number of English-proficient Americans who are homeless or depend on food shelves to survive. By worse, he meant worse than being welfare-dependent, perhaps out on the streets.

The factors that will contribute to lack of self-sufficiency are these.

1. **Early marriage age.** In spite of counsel from leaders and parents to postpone marriage until completion of high school, Hmong youth continue to marry at ages far below that of the general population. Hmong girls marry, on average, almost a decade earlier than American women. One eighth-grade Hmong wife estimated that a third of the Hmong girls in her eighth grade class were already married. (The peak marriage age for Hmong girls is 16; most marry between the ages of 14 and 18, while boys marry between the ages of 17 and 23.) On the other hand, some girls were determined not to replicate the "mistakes" of their friends and avoided contacts that might lead to marriage. We met a number of 19-year-old single Hmong women, but an unmarried woman over that age would indeed be a rarity. One college student estimated that perhaps one percent of Hmong women over age 20

and one percent of Hmong men over age 23 remain unmarried, although these percentages are gradually increasing.

Some Hmong adults believe that the marriage age for Hmong girls has actually decreased since arrival in the United States because of erosion of parental authority. In Laos, the parents could prevail upon the girl to stay home and help them for another year before marriage. In the United States the girl, who might be at odds with her parents because of her "Americanization," is less likely to yield to her parents' wishes. Marriage can be a form of "running away."

Because they are growing up in an American environment where adolescence is prolonged and instant gratification is glorified and because of their limited exposure to responsible adult behavior, it is likely that Hmong girls in the United States at age 14 or 15 are less mature than they would be at that age if they were raised in prewar Laos.

Minnesota law permits marriage at age 16 with the parents' permission and at age 18 without permission. Legally sanctioned marriage is rare among the Hmong; even those who might legally qualify procrastinate about obtaining a marriage license, although a license is eventually obtained. Some believe that licenses are unnecessary if you are not a citizen, and that age restrictions do not apply to noncitizens. Recognition of the marriage within the culture is so emphatic that a marriage license may seem superfluous.

2. Early childbearing and large family size. A combination of pressure to prove fertility, tradition, health beliefs, and distrust of birth control results in high birth rates for Hmong teenagers. Girls who marry between the ages of 12 and 16 usually have one to three children by the time they reach 18. One of the teenagers we interviewed reported that her classmate in a Wisconsin high school had five children by the time she graduated from high school at age 18.

   The Hmong fertility rate in the United States is 304.7 per 1,000 for women ages 15 to 44. Every year, three out of ten Hmong women in this age group gives birth, according to a 1987 report by Robert A. Hahn and Marjorie A. Muecke. ("The Anthropology of Birth in Five U.S. Ethnic Populations: Implications for Obstretical Practice" in Current Problems in Obstetrics, Gynecology and Fertility, Vol. 10, No. 4). The large family size that was appropriate and desirable in an isolated farming village in Laos locks families into poverty and helplessness in the United States.

3. Home environments that are not conducive to study. The multigenerational nature of the Hmong household means that there are many family members in each household, most of them children. A Hmong teenager may be living not only with his or her own parents and siblings but with a sister-in-law and nieces and nephews. The sounds of the television, babies crying, kids quarrelling, and adults discussing family problems are all likely to go on at once. At night, in most public housing projects and poor neighborhoods, it becomes oppressively noisy outside, with loud music, the sound of motors being gunned, gunshots, arguments, glass breaking, etc. The noise, combined with fear of break-ins, may result in poor sleeping, which will further inhibit the youth from doing well in school.

A teenager is pressured to join in the family activity; should he choose not to, it is still difficult for the teenager to concentrate on his or her studies. It is also difficult for the teenager to find someone who can help him or her with homework. The teen may, in fact, be required to help the parent with his or her homework. The youth may also be required to do a lot of chores that will distract them from their studies--this is particularly the case with girls, who do much of the cooking, child care, and housework. Obligations to help out go beyond the immediate family, and the youth find themselves helping less acculturated and less literate family members.

The materialistic emphasis in most Hmong families is on cars, televisions, video cassette recorders, cameras, stereos, tape recorders, sewing machines, and freezers, not books, magazines, newspapers, bookshelves, or desks, or other study aids. In high-crime neighborhoods, these luxury items must be guarded, and teenagers often perform house-sitting duties while parents go out.

4. **Limited ability to conceptualize about future employment.** More than any other Southeast Asian refugee group, the Hmong seemed unable to conceptualize about future employment. Few seemed to have any definite career goals. Although most girls said that it was important for the wife to work part-time to help her family, very few had any idea of what type of work a young woman could get. "Any kind of work" was the most frequent reply, the same reply that chronically unemployed Hmong adults give when asked what type of work they are looking for.

   Young Hmong men's entry into the work force was delayed by lack of clear career goals, inability to judge the suitability of a particular career, and unrealistic ideas about what work is available for those with a high school education or less. Like their fathers and older brothers, young Hmong men are exhibiting a pattern of taking vocational courses and deciding afterwards that the work they have trained for is too hard, dangerous, demeaning, unavailable, or otherwise unsuitable, then switching to another training program instead of joining the work force full-time.

   As their training period lengthens, the family size continues to increase, and by the time vocational training is completed, the young Hmong man is often hard pressed to be able to support his family, even if he is higher up on the wage scale than those with only a high school education.

5. **Early and widespread dependence on welfare.** Under the welfare system, the more children you have, the larger the grant, and the more affordable are certain luxuries such as late-model cars and television sets. A Hmong family usually gets its start while at least one of the parents is under 18 and receiving AFDC. By the time teen parents reach 18, they may have two or three children and thus qualify for AFDC as a family unit of their own. The young family has already adjusted to the regulations of welfare. What is most advantageous to the family under the welfare system is not what is most advantageous to a self-supporting family; yet the family tends to conform to the system under which it was originally founded.

The welfare system fits the Hmong people's image of themselves as independent people much more than low-wage employment. In Laos, except for military service, the Hmong avoided wage labor. "The Hmong never like to be other people's slaves," one community leader explained.

The welfare system also fits in with the Hmong ideal of interdependence. The U.S.-supported Royal Lao Government depended on the Hmong to serve as soldiers during the Vietnam conflict. Now that the Hmong have lost their homeland--in part, they believe, because the Americans were not tenacious enough in their struggle--they are depending on the Americans to help them out. The Hmong believe that such help was promised to them during the war, and that Americans should be held to their promise. Welfare support seems small compensation for the loss of their cousins, their farms, their animals, their country, and their way of life.

The adult generation, because of its strong cultural memory and spirit of mutual cooperation, seems able to avoid many of the social ills that come with long-term unemployment. But the upcoming generation is quickly forgetting or never learning Hmong customs and social code and may become at high risk for socially deviant behavior if it remains on the bottom rung of American society.

Parental authority is greatly undermined by the family's welfare status. Under the AFDC program, adults are helped not for their own sake but because their children need help. In this sense, it is the children who are supporting the parents. Teens whose parents perform no interactive role with American society may behave scornfully toward the adults.

6. Lack of role models. The Hmong leadership and most Hmong parents emphasize the need to complete a high school education before marriage. In this respect and in many others, the Hmong have proven themselves resistant to the advice of their leaders. Although they may recognize that their leaders speak of the ideal, they also believe that fate will probably intervene and aspirations will be tossed quickly aside when the impulse to marry occurs.

The Hmong have some powerful role models who inspire the male youth who excel, including several Hmong with master's degrees or doctorates who are in the fields of law, computer science, medicine, and education. But the youth who are not college-bound have an insufficient number of realistic role models: people in the technical trades with stable employment histories who live a more prosperous life than those on welfare. Instead, if they look to Hmong adults as role models, they see a considerable number of people who have either been in and out of the work force or just never in. They see a widespread attitude that work is an optional part of American life, not an obligation. And they see, in their own community, very little stigma attached to being on welfare. In fact, several of the girls interviewed for this study--all of whose families live in public housing--asserted that all the Hmong in the United States are "middle class."

Only a few Hmong women have received their bachelor's degrees, but they are not as visible as the young Hmong men who have graduated and so are not considered role models by most younger girls. Rela-

tively few adult women work outside the home. A 19-year-old girl who was finishing high school said she was regarded as "tough" by her peers because of her resistance to marriage and her insistence on continuing her education. An 18-year-old Hmong woman from a neighboring state, who has been highly honored for her academic achievements and is attending a prestigious college in the East, was regarded mostly with incredulity by the Hmong, who felt it was impossible for a Hmong woman to achieve the goal of becoming a doctor. Her aspirations were scoffed at, and it was expected by both teenage girls and young men that she would give up her ambitions for marriage. College and marriage seem incompatible to many Hmong girls, because long hours spent in class and in the library would arouse the husband's suspicions.

7. **Discrimination.** The Hmong youth were concerned about discrimination experienced by <u>both their parents and themselves</u>. Because of this, several of the Hmong youth were skeptical about whether their hard work and aspirations could truly lead them to success. The fathers of the Boy Scouts we interviewed expected their sons to be leaders and seemed to consider the Boy Scouts good leadership training ground. These fathers were generally former military leaders in Laos. But the Boy Scouts were concerned that a Hmong man with a master's degree had been unable to find a job. They had a strong consciousness of not being accepted into the mainstream of the society, and they felt that racism might block their own career paths as well as those of their older cousins.

   Hmong adults in the work force, who were interviewed in the course of other projects, tell many stories of discrimination, and they are unlikely to forget any slight or insult. Some have been called "monkeys" and "jungle men" by their supervisors. In one sewing company, at lunch, the boss asked his young female employees if they were eating cat meat. When a 25-year-old man died suddenly of natural causes a few years ago, it was rumored in the Hmong community that he died of injuries from a beating by American coworkers who didn't like him because he was "short" and "had black hair."

8. **Segregation.** Although the Hmong are integrated into parts of American life, they are only marginally so. Most of the Hmong youth interviewed on this subject reported having no American friends outside of school. Several also reported incidences of hostility against them in school, instigated by white, Black, or Vietnamese students. They felt that they were criticized by other students for using their own language, but they were also laughed at for using poor English.

   A number of Hmong children have gone through an early grade of school without speaking a single word, even though they are able to converse in Hmong and sometimes English at home. "You cannot pronounce the words," said one 19-year-old senior in high school. "The other students laugh and make you feel embarrassed. It's like you have no mouth."

   "My little sister can speak English, but when she tried to speak in school, everyone laughed at her," another Hmong teenager reported.

"So she didn't talk the whole semester after that. The teacher wrote a note to my mother and said maybe she was deaf and blind. My sister really cried about that."

"It's hard to get friends with American kids. They think you're so dumb," said a 19-year-old.

"The more smarter you are, the more they hate you," said her 15-year-old sister. "Americans treat you very low. They say, 'Look at that short little girl!' Then you get hate."

Some students felt they were free to speak only during their English as a second language (ESL) class. Often, the ESL teacher was the only teacher who knew anything about the private lives of the girls, including whether they were married or had children.

In housing, the Hmong have tended to cluster in certain neighborhoods where there are affordable rents and where they are not discriminated against. They are concentrated in the public housing projects in St. Paul and Minneapolis, and in a few inner city neighborhoods where housing stock is deteriorated. People outside the community have begun to refer to some of these neighborhoods as Hmong ghettoes. Because of their large family size, the Hmong are generally unable to move out of public housing or poor neighborhoods until they are able to afford a house of their own. Very few Hmong have that opportunity in a metropolitan area with high real estate values, although a handful of more successful Hmong now own homes in Brooklyn Park and St. Paul.

Social isolation of the Hmong is reinforced by segregation in churches (separate services for the Hmong adults and separate Sunday school for the Hmong children are the rule at many churches), and segregated social groups. There are all-Hmong Girl Scout troops and Boy Scout troops. If American adults cannot conceive of a way to get Hmong and American children to socialize together, it is doubtful that the children will improvise a way on their own.

More than any other refugee group in Minnesota, the Hmong have captured the hearts of American "helpers." The shower of assistance has in some cases promoted clientelistic behavior in the Hmong. "Helpless behavior" is also reinforced by the welfare system, which, on the local level, contrary to federal policy, seems at times to be teaching dependency skills rather than supporting recipients toward self-sufficiency. In the United States, social accord is built on reciprocity, not beneficence. It is likely that the social gap between non-Hmong and Hmong will widen and hostilities will increase unless the Hmong can be brought into more reciprocal relationships with Americans and with the American economy and society.

The Interviews

We interviewed a number of Hmong adults to come up with the composite stories of Mai and Xeng. In both stories, the parents are unable to earn a living. In both stories, one marriage partner (the girl) is a teenager, and in both the male has post-secondary education. The stories were composed so as to provoke discussions of Hmong vs. American values.

In the girl's story, the parents are unable to work because the family is large. No one questioned this reason for not working; the girls seemed some-

what reluctant to talk about their parents' work status in a group. Those who did speak of their parents said they couldn't learn English because they were "too old" and thus they could not work. Size of family of origin for the 24 Hmong girls ranged from four to twelve, with eight the median.

Most of the teenagers objected to the part of the story in which the girl marries a man with a master's degree. Some felt it was unrealistic for a man with a master's degree to be interested in an average-looking teenage girl of average intelligence; many objected that someone with a master's degree would be too old. They preferred to marry a man of about age 18. One said that a man who claimed to have a master's degree was probably lying in order to get the girl to marry him.

Girls who mentioned their own age of marriage reported getting married as young as age 12. Many of the high school students we interviewed in St. Paul were already married and had two or three children; we were impressed that they remained in school, in spite of a heavy load of housework and child care. One said she had to get up at 5 a.m. to fix breakfast for her parents-in-law before going to school.

Unmarried girls defined an ideal age for marriage as old as 25, with most preferring 18 to 19. Few seemed confident that they could retain their goal of marrying only after high school graduation. "What you say is easy. What you do is hard," said one 14-year-old.

A group of single 13- and 14-year-olds were preoccupied with the various problems of courtship they were undergoing. They were concerned about having a good bride price offered to their parents; otherwise it would seem that their parents regarded them as lazy and were willing to get rid of them for a low price. They considered $2,000 a good bride price. Some parents might hold out for $3,000; in this case, they thought the boy was likely to forget about the girl and buy a new car instead.

The girls felt they were getting contradictory messages when their parents told them to wait for graduation to marry, but then bragged about how smart, hard-working, and pretty their daughter was in public, even though she was lazy. "They just want their daughter to get married and get the fortune," a 13-year-old said.

Some girls have a steady stream of boys visiting them from the age of 12, with a number of the boys proposing marriage. The girls interviewed felt that the girl who did not have many suitors would be more likely to get married at a young age, because the girl with many visitors would develop a bad reputation, even though all visits took place under adult supervision, and the less popular girl was more likely to be a faithful marriage partner. Almost universally, the girls were opposed to dating as it is practiced by Americans because, as one explained, "boys are rude" and the girl "might get pregnant."

In one group, half of the girls did not feel that a good education was an important quality in a husband. Welfare status of the boy's family was also unimportant. The important factors were "the way they dress and comb their hair" and "as long as he works...or he loves you."

"We're prejudiced against ugly and poor," one girl said. She is one of several girls who echoed the belief that all the Hmong in the United States are middle class.

Several girls mentioned the impulsive nature of marriage. "Sometimes when you get mad at your parents, you want to get married," said a 13-year-old. Another girl reported that her girlfriend had a fight with her regular boyfriend, so she married another young man that same week to exact revenge. "I know one girl who was 12 years old, in sixth grade, and she married a guy

in ninth grade, and he could hardly drive. But they liked each other so much, they couldn't wait," said a 15-year-old. "Crazy for love," commented her older sister. A few girls discussed a friend in St. Paul who got married when she was in the fifth grade because "things just happened too fast." Now, three years later, she has two children and "is pretty happy," although she wishes she could be irresponsible again.

The Minneapolis girls spoke somewhat enviously of a special program for pregnant girls, PACE, because there was less embarrassment in attending the special program, the bus picks up pregnant girls right at the door of their house, and there's no gym or homework. (Generally, only the ESL teachers, who understand the Hmong culture, will know that a pregnant girl is married. To all others, she may pass herself off as an unwed mother, a dissimulation likely to increase social isolation from Americans.)

Many girls drop out of school when they marry. A 19-year-old said she was one of only two Hmong girls in her graduating class who remained unmarried. Several others at the high school, which almost all Hmong teenagers in Minneapolis attend, were already married and were attending high school along with their husbands. The other girls become privy to the married girls' family troubles; one 10th grader was too tired to study because she and her husband ran out of money to buy diapers and fought about it; an intelligent senior girl with two kids was married to a "punk," who wouldn't even drive her to the place where she was supposed to pick up the scholarship she'd won. The 19-year-old girl reported that the girls usually do better than the boys in school until they have children; then their grades drop because of their workload at home. Some husbands do not want their wives to go to school because they are jealous that they meet other young men. "Hmong men really love their wives. That's why they're so jealous," one teen reported.

Some girls worried that if they waited until 19 or older to marry, their value as a bride would go down and their fate would be to marry an older man who was taking a second wife.

Those girls who resisted early marriage seemed to do so with the help of parents and older brothers, who sent male visitors home and wouldn't let the girl take phone calls from boys while she was doing her homework.

When it came to their own career goals, most girls had no clear concept of their futures in the work force, except most felt a wife should work part-time even if her husband had a good job. One said her parents regarded being a doctor or teacher as good choices because those were the only occupations they knew. Another said she planned to go to college to be a secretary, and another thought she would be "a cashier or something." One seemed interested in a career in science. "My husband wants me to get a good job, like a secretary," said a 16-year-old. Most, even the few who expressed aspirations to go to college, were skeptical about their ability to succeed and thought vocational school or a part-time job were more realistic. One 13-year-old girl whose father is employed said that the government could help her generation have a good future by "paying more AFDC to help them."

"If the President doesn't want us to get married, he could help us pay for college and find us work," said a 14-year-old girl. The 13-year-old then remarked that Hmong girls could lie to the government that they weren't married in order to get scholarship money set aside for single girls.

The girls echoed male suspicions that a well-educated girl would not be a good wife, although some disagreed. "If a girl is smarter than the husband, she might trick her husband," said one. "Lots of guys say the more educated the woman is, the more affairs she's going to have," said a 19-year-old. "The

more educated the wife, the more tough she is; she thinks she can do anything she wants."

Many of the girls expressed a high opinion of their own intelligence and that of other young women, comparing their grade point averages favorably to those of a group of "punk" Hmong males who are trying to be "cool and fancy and tough more than Americans" and "don't care if they're alive or dead." The interviewer noted that the girls almost always rated themselves as doing well or very well in school, although English levels and interest in study at home did not seem to bear out that assessment in a few cases.

One 18-year-old girl who had other plans besides marriage for herself wrote: "I want to married when I finish with everything that I had planing for my future. I still want to go to college because living in this country is a big chance and great experience to prove that you can do what you had dream--and work hard to build your future life to make it more easier for your family. If I were married I don't want to have a lot of kids because it's hard to take care your kid."

Although many of the girls thought that five, the number mentioned in Mai's story, was an acceptable number of children, many wanted fewer and some wanted more. One girl preferred six to ten and another eight to ten, so the children could help the parents when they grew up, and so in case some turned out bad, there would be others who would "turn out good." The few who said having children should be delayed until a few years after marriage did not believe that any artificial means of birth control should be used to achieve that end. Negative remarks were made about every available form of birth control on the market; every girl seemed to know of negative experiences Hmong women had had with each one.

One girl observed that a young woman should bear children soon after marriage; otherwise she might be considered infertile, and her husband would feel justified in marrying a second wife in order to produce offspring.

It was notable that, unlike girls in the other Southeast Asian groups, almost all of the Hmong girls expressed very little conviction that they could plan their own future. Even those with higher aspirations anticipated, perhaps even expected, that their plans could easily be dashed by a marriage proposal, pregnancy, or inability to perform academically.

Low academic aspirations in girls may be traced in part to the patrilineal nature of the Hmong clan system. Although Hmong lineage groups pool money to support a boy's higher education, they would not do the same for a girl because she is expected to join another clan when she marries, and thus the investment would not be returned.

It was unfortunate that we did not reach as wide a cross-section of boys as girls when we interviewed the Hmong. Most of the boys we met were in self-selected groups of sons of leaders, with perhaps higher aspirations and better skills than many of their peers. We did not interview any of the so-called "punk" Hmong, who are probably more confused about their futures than the down-to-business Boy Scouts and young men selected by a youth leader whom we did interview.

The story of moderately successful Xeng was intended to show someone who is outwardly successful but may be making some mistakes in requiring too much help of his lineage group without returning anything of equal value. The story was told to us by a Hmong man who is a prosperous, skilled blue-collar worker and who sees college education as a corrupting influence on some young people.

The Boy Scouts we talked to spoke proudly of their father's former positions as military or village leaders in Laos, but skirted around the question

of what they were doing in the United States. They and other boys said they felt their progress in school was hindered by their low levels of English. A few mentioned that they spoke much better English when living in Duluth or another city where there were not many Hmong; they felt that they did not get much practice speaking English outside of school or, sometimes, even in school.

While they were pressed by their fathers to do well in school, several said that their fathers did not require them to do homework nor did they attend school events. To these fathers, the final grades were what mattered, and not necessarily the process by which they were achieved.

The boys believed in the family system in which uncles help to pay for a promising boy's education, but they generally thought Xeng went too far in accepting help. They thought attendance at a private high school and the trip to France were unnecessary. They also thought that Xeng should have taken the factory job when he couldn't find other work as a temporary means of getting by. One thought that Xeng spent too many years in school for a Hmong man, but others said they believed a B.A. or B.S. by itself was little guarantee of employment, and anyone going to college should at least plan to get a master's degree. A few gave examples of educated Hmong men who had not gotten jobs; racism was deemed to be the cause of this, and some young men expected to be barred from certain job opportunities because of racism. They seemed to bear a strong consciousness of not being accepted by mainstream society.

It is significant that among the Hmong boys' strongest role models were people with past glories unable to match their achievements in the United States (their fathers) and young men who in spite of working hard were unable to succeed because of societal forces (the M.A. who could not find a job).

The boys did not scoff at the idea that Xeng could hold a good government position in Laos, as was his father's wish. It remained the dream of several of these young men to return to a democratic Laos, even though they plan their careers as if they expect to stay in the United States. The sons of leaders see themselves as the future leaders of their communities, and their fathers have assigned them that role. "Everyone wants to be a leader," one Hmong man said.

Most boys thought Xeng made a poor marriage choice because his wife, at 14, was too young. "Why if she can't cook or work? Who would help you support the family? It doesn't matter how she looks. It matters is that she is also well-educated," one 14-year-old wrote.

"I think he should marry an older girl. He's go(t) to think first before doing it. It doesn't matter if she is kind and beautiful, the matter is that she should know how to cook, do housework, etc," wrote another 14-year-old.

Another 14-year-old thought his peers were expressing the ideal, but in the young man's heart he is still Hmong and so it is realistic that he would marry the girl without considering other factors. Eighteen or 19 was mentioned as a more suitable age for a girl to marry.

One high school student said that it would be OK for a well-educated man to marry a 14-year-old, but a man who could not support a family by himself should marry a woman closer to his own age, who could help him. "Sounds good but I think she couldn't take care of the family. Because she too still young," wrote another.

The youth felt under pressure to do well in school. However, when they acted "more American," they did less well. Being American means having a good time and not caring as much about school.

The boys expressed interest in such fields as engineering or electronics. One young man said he was interested in being an M.D. or lawyer, but when he said that, people thought he was showing off.

The boys did not seem to mind postponing marriage until they finished their education, if they thought they were smart enough to get a good education. One thought he would marry at 25 to 30. Some were also willing to leave their parents in order to live on the campus of a distant college and were looking forward to some privacy.

Many of those who were not the sons of leaders, those who have come to the United States within the past few years, did not see the story as realistic for them because of the gaps in their education and low English skills.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings about aspirations and expectations of school work were presented as essays organized by ethnic groups and within this, by the Statement of Work's primary study questions. Other findings are placed throughout the discussions about theory and method. Here is presented a discussion of the findings.

1. It is crucial for policy makers and service providers to learn to recognize the distinct differences between and among the several Southeast Asian ethnic communities, that is, the four studied here and the ethnic Chinese refugees from Southeast Asia. The failure to do this will result in poor policy and poor programs. Programs conceptualized for "refugee youth" are based on an idea which is too general. Focus must be on, for example, Khmer youth.

2. When these data are combined by ethnic group, clear differences are seen between groups. These should not deflect awareness of intra-group differences which are also clear and profound. The common-sense distinctions between those with "clear, less clear or unclear" aspirations suggests that those with clear aspirations may need less help in clarifying aspirations than those whose aspirations are relatively unclear. This is not necessarily true, however, because clear aspirations may reflect simply the mastery of the aspiration language and not be a predictive indicator of action to achieve the aspiration. In short, the reader is cautioned against interpreting these data as support for the modification of policy or the creation or closing of programs.

3. With points 1 and 2 in mind, it is clear that overall the Vietnamese youth interviewed are closer to ideal American norms about school and work than are youth in the other groups. Indeed, they may be closest in words and actions than many subgroups of indigenous youth, e.g., Native-Americans. While we did not sample the youth population so as to be able to generalize about it, we can say that the Vietnamese youth are succeeding in their own terms and in the terms of the larger community. That many of them have been in the United States for more than ten years reminds us that refugee status covers a very long period of time, from literally weeks to more than a decade. Such distinctions should be formalized in language, e.g., simply as recent, short-time, long-time refugee, or the like.

4. This study hovered between the level of individual and small group. We learned personal aspirations which were likely to some degree, group aspirations (or aspirations of the majority of group members), and the aspirations of the collectivity, the ethnic community ("The Hmong people," etc.). For indigenous Americans, personal aspirations are individual statements by an individual, while for many Southeast Asian youth aspirations are a family, friendship, group and a collectivity statement expressing the wishes and plans of more than one person. Thus one may interpret the data as an indicator of individual and/or group acculturation, although one must be very

conservative in so doing because the data were not collected for that purpose.

5. Related to number 4 is the point that personal success among indigenous Americans is attributed to individual hard work and familial support, while this is not true among these Southeast Asian youth. For the Vietnamese youth, this is a fair picture of their beliefs, while for the Hmong youth, their ethnic community plays a large role in individual success, itself seen as a family success.

6. Among the factors seemingly associated with likely economic self-sufficiency among these youth are English language proficiency, length of time in the United States, age upon entry to the United States, ethnic group membership, gender, family stability, sibling order, and effective use of support systems, among others. This study was not expected to find, measure, or assess the relative contributions of such factors. These emerged in the interviews, but with their relative predictive potency unknown (and unknowable, for now).

APPENDIX A

Research Notes

An innovative study is an opportunity to devise new ways to do a research project; it is thus an opportunity to assess the innovations implemented and to highlight for the contractor and the reader unusual aspects of the study design, methods, and procedures. The following five brief essays do this.

Research Staff

Three interviewers were employed in addition to the two co-principal investigators. All were women; two were graduate students and the third was an undergraduate at the University. Two of the three were bilingual in English and one of the Southeast Asian languages.

Ms. Phuc Nguyen is a Vietnamese-born undergraduate student in Youth Studies who came to the United States as a refugee in 1975.

Ms. Ruth Hammond speaks Hmong, is an English as a second language teacher to Southeast Asian refugees, an editor and research assistant for the Southeast Asian Refugee Studies Project, a writer and a former newspaper reporter, with extensive personal and professional ties in the local Hmong community.

Ms. Norah Neale is a graduate student in psychology with several years of internship experience with Southeast Asian University students, and the author of a Master's Thesis on employment aspirations of Southeast Asian University youth. She has a particular expertise in Southeast Asian women.

Staff Meetings

The staff met almost weekly for at least two hours during the project to discuss the issues, explicate the method, interview together some ethnic leaders, prepare for pre-testing, discuss the pre-test results, and review findings.

Everyone participated and contributed during this process. Clearly, each person's pre-study knowledge of a particular ethnic group, and the co-principal investigator's knowledge about adolescent and youth development provided useful background for developing the study and for data interpretation. That each had professional training and experience in at least one style of group leadership proved valuable.

The Group Interview

An interesting limitation resulted from the seeming presence in each group of one youth (or adult) whose job it was to insure that discussants gave similar answers and that these conformed to his (or someone's) conception of how the group was to be understood by outsiders such as the research staff, i.e., a "party line." It seemed as if each group's oldest member (particularly for boys) was a "political commissar" whose presence set boundaries on the

range and depth of group answers. This was a disturbing presence, difficult to assess because there is no base from which to calibrate the distortion. Put differently, the answers given by one youth are expected to differ from those given by two or three youth sitting together as a group and answering as group members. This situation is crucial for understanding the answer to a question.

Thus, group interviews of adolescents and youth from the same ethnic community, of the same gender and same approximate age are a different reality than individual interviews or those with youth of mixed ethnic origin or gender or age. This is obvious. With these youth, the group was beneficial to its members, in our view, because it allowed them to discuss their often very similar backgrounds and experiences and, in this way, contributed to the reliability of these answers to factual questions, e.g., would a youth in a refugee camp have money? Would someone have to pay for English lessons in a camp? On the other hand, there is the problem of the "party line" answer.

Further, there is another crucial issue which emerged in the group interview which can be read as a substantive contribution to this study: Youth in discussion groups of peers, friends, and relatives give an answer to our question which is intended to be heard by the group members on its way to us. Put differently, each youth discussant who gave us an answer chose his/her response aware that people he will see often and over time heard the response. To the youth, our question elicited his response. We heard his "answer" while the other youth present heard him making a public commitment about what he will try to become. We will leave and likely never meet him again, while they will likely be together and in his mind and theirs, hold him to his publicly stated goal. For example, to answer our question, "What kind of work do you want to do after you finish school?," the response "engineer" closes our question and provides an answer (i.e., a situationally appropriate, legitimate response for us). The same response is heard by the other youth in the group as his commitment to becoming an engineer, as a personal goal statement. They assess his answer from two points of view. Is it an appropriate response from him, to us, his friends, his family, his competence, etc.? And is it an appropriate response from him to these outsiders? Is this how we want those outsiders to see us? Hence, a response teaches us much. In short, group discussions and group interviews and these youth are very complex moments and the responses given as answers are not always self-evident in their multiple meanings.

Yet given the chronological and developmental age of these adolescents and the powerful place of same-age friends in their lives; given the similarity between and among them and in their refugee experience; and given the potential problems of language and understanding, group interviews were economical and effective opportunities for data collection.

A Note on the Use of Translators

Initially, we were prepared to do the interviews in the appropriate ethnic language. In the end, almost all were done in English. This was so because all but the most recent refugee youth understood and spoke the language; because group members could help each other, when necessary and because we can believe that an adult from the same ethnic group "distorts" the youth's answers. That is, the answer given to us in the presence of that person would be different from the answer given to us in the absence of that

person. Since each answer is situation-specific, neither is more truthful or false than the other. Each is simply different.

Since the purpose of the study was, to paraphrase, learn what Southeast Asian refugee youth would tell University researchers about their aspirations and expectations for education and employment, we chose to exclude outside translators. Our bilingual staff almost always spoke in English.

Once the language issue is isolated, we are left with the more difficult issue of the effect of an ethnic group staff person on the youth from the same ethnic community. Related is the effect of that staff on youth from other Southeast Asian ethnic groups, given the historical and contemporary relations between particular ethnic groups. All these possibilities contribute complexity to a seemingly straightforward study.

Far less complex is the issue of gender match between staff and youth and within youth groups.

A Note on Gender

Our strong impression is that groups should be gender homogeneous across the age span, at this time. Further, there should be gender homogeneity between researcher and respondent, particularly for adolescents. This seems to be more important for girls than for boys, but is important for both.

A Final Note on "Truth," Validity and Reliability

As noted in the section on research methods, and as presented in our response to the Statement of Work, we think that the concepts of truth, validity and reliability are complex in the framework of Neo-Positivist research and extremely complex in alternative frameworks of social science theory and research. There are not simply "academic issues," particularly, if public policy is to rest as a base, however lightly, upon social science.

For example, the question of whether a set of youth responses can be read as a cultural statement or only as some combination of individual answers is powerful from the perspective of policy and program. For example: Do a set of responses from a discussion group which are highly reliable, i.e., very similar, denote a cultural response? A response of individuals together for a moment? A group-culture response?

Throughout, we have presented their responses and our understanding of these. For all practical purposes, this is the truth as we know it.

APPENDIX B

The Stories

Herein are presented the thirty-three stories constructed after interviews with adults in each of the four ethnic communities. It was learned that gender was a crucial factor in understanding the community's interpretation of success so there are stories about women and men. Success is relative, it is said, and so it is here; moderately successful, unsuccessful, and successful. Three levels of success for males and females for each of the four ethnic groups should have resulted in twenty-four stories. Thirty-three are presented here because nine are duplicates of a particular category. Duplicates of categories occurred because our various adult informants gave us varying versions of what constituted success or the lack of it.

In the study, only the moderately successful stories were used because of time restrictions.

Stories of Moderately Successful Southeast Asian Women and Men

Vietnamese Woman--Moderately Successful

Mai came to the U.S. in 1978 with her family when she was 17 years old.

Her family had a small business in Vietnam. They sold their business to pay for the whole family to get out.

A church helped them resettle in Minnesota. They were on welfare for a while; then Mai's father found a job in a factory. Her mom stayed home to take care of her younger brothers and sisters. Her older brothers and sisters also worked in factories to help out.

Mai was a nice girl. She got along with teachers and friends. She studied hard to get good grades, and she got B's and C's in most classes. She took typing and other courses for which she did not need much English.

In the summers, she worked as a file clerk in an office through the CETA program..

After she graduated, she went to Vo-Tech school. She took Data Entry and found a job as a file clerk in an office. She also worked as an assembler at another job.

She could save some money because she lived with her parents.

Then she got married. Her husband also worked 2 jobs.

She got pregnant when she was 23, and she took a six-month leave from her work just before her baby was due.

Cambodian Woman--Moderately Successful

Waliwon lost her whole family during the Pol Pot years in Cambodia, and she spent several years in a refugee camp.

She came to the U.S. alone in 1982, when she was 13.

She lived with an American foster family.

She stayed with the American family until she finished high school.

Then she moved in with her aunt, who was very traditional and would not let her go out with her friends. So she moved to an apartment with two other Cambodian women who were a few years older than she was.

She got a job at 3M.

She also took courses at a junior college at night.

She didn't know how involved she wanted to be in the Cambodian community because the Cambodian refugees didn't get along well with each other.

Cambodian Woman--Moderately Successful
(Not used in study)

Uon came to the U.S. when she was 16 in 1978.

She came with her parents.

They had helped her continue her studies while they were in a refugee camp.

She completed high school and went to the University, for two years and got good grades.

In college, she met an American man who asked her to marry him. She decided to marry him and then dropped out of college to have a family.

Later, her mother babysat for her children while she volunteered to help Cambodian elderly and young people.

She was very happy as her goal was to help members of her community who respected her because she helped them.

Lao Woman--Moderately Successful

Anoulack came to the U.S. in 1984, when she was 13 years old.

Her father had been in the military in Laos. The family lived in a refugee camp for five years before they were allowed to resettle in the U.S.

Her father went to school so he could study English and become a truck mechanic, as he'd been in the Lao Army. The family lived on welfare for two years until Anoulack's father completed his studies and got a job.

Anoulack's parents pressured her to do well in high school, and she did, but she couldn't stand having her parents control her life all the time.

So when a boy asked her to get married, she jumped at the chance to move out of her parents' house and be on her own.

After she was married for less than a year, she discovered her husband had a bad drinking problem and a hot temper. He wouldn't let her go to work because he was jealous, and she got terribly bored staying home all day. So she divorced him and went to live by herself.

She went to a community college during the day and worked as a waitress in a Chinese restaurant at night.

When she finished her community college course, she got a job downtown as a data processor. She made enough money to go shopping every week, and she always wore attractive, fashionable clothes. She was also able to decorate her apartment nicely.

A lot of men asked her out on the weekends, so she was able to enjoy going out to restaurants and to the theater without having anyone to boss her around from day to day. She liked being independent and popular at the same time.

Hmong Woman--Moderately Successful

Mai arrived in the United States with her family in 1983, when she was 12 years old.

She and her family had lived in a refugee camp in Thailand for four years before that.

She was the fifth of nine children. Her father went to English school, but he didn't get a job because he didn't think he could make enough to support his big family. Her mother made a little extra money for the family by selling her pa ndau.

Mai was an average-looking girl who didn't do that well in school. But she was very obedient to her mother and father, and had a sweet temper. She worked hard around the house helping her mother take care of the house and children.

When she was 13, boys started coming to visit her at her parents' house. One of them was a young man who was just finishing his master's degree in computer science. She wondered why such a smart man would be interested in her when she was neither smart nor beautiful, but he said he preferred to have a wife who was a little bit stupid because she would need her husband all her life, whereas an intelligent woman could take care of herself and might not be faithful.

Mai married the computer scientist when she was 15 years old and dropped out of the 9th grade a few months later after she got pregnant. Because her husband had a good job, they bought a nice house and were able to take vacations all over the country. She took good care of his house while he went to work and fixed delicious food for him to eat. She never had to go to work but stayed home and took care of their five children.

Vietnamese Man--Moderately Successful

Son came to the U.S. with his father in 1980 when he was 17 years old.

His father worked in a car shop in Vietnam. They did not have enough money to pay for Son's mother and sister to escape with them.

Son was an average student with B's and C's in most classes. He tried hard in his studies but the mainstream classes were very hard to understand. He could only do well in math, gym, art and ESL classes.

He had a job in summer doing maintenance work in school. He learned this kind of work well and got to do some electrical work with the custodian. His boss liked him.

After he graduated, he went to Vo-Tech school and became an electrician. He found a job working for building maintenance through his former boss's recommendation.

Cambodian Man--Moderately Successful

Van came to the United States in 1980 when he was 12 years old.

His parents both went to work at assembly jobs and were able to make enough money to buy a new car and a modest house in the suburbs.

Van tried hard at school, but he was just an average student. After high school he got a job in electronics assembly.

When he was 20, he decided to marry a Cambodian girl who had just graduated from high school.

He barely ever had time to see his friends, but he had no time to drink or gamble or get into trouble, either. Van and his wife made enough money to have all the things their American neighbors had, and they tried to live like Americans and not think too much about Cambodian culture or their past.

Cambodian Man--Moderately Successful
(Not used in study)

Ang came to the U.S. in 1981 when he was 13.

Ang was from a farm family in Cambodia and had no education before he came to the United States.

In school, he was very frustrated at how hard it was to learn English. He did not enjoy school, but looked forward to Saturdays when he could watch wrestling on TV. He decided he wanted to become a wrestler, so he joined the wrestling team in high school and studied just enough so he wouldn't get kicked off the wrestling team. He became a very accomplished wrestler and helped his high school win the state wrestling match.

He went on to be a professional wrestler and was one of the most popular wrestlers on TV. He knew he could not wrestle to make a living for all of his life, but it was a very enjoyable occupation for him. He decided he would worry about finding another career later.

Many people were impressed by his success.

Lao Man--Moderately Successful

Bounchanh arrived in the U.S. with three younger brothers and two sisters in 1983 when he was 17. His parents were still in Laos, and his father had been in a reeducation camp for eight years.

Bounchanh had attended a village school in Laos for three years. He helped his brothers and sisters to escape to a Thai refugee camp in 1979. He studied there by paying a tutor.

He wanted to get a good education in the U.S., but all he got out of studying during his first year at the University were a lot of headaches. He realized he wasn't cut out for college, so he transferred to technical school and learned to be a machinist.

He liked working with his hands, and he made enough money as a machinist to afford a modest three-bedroom house in the city.

When he had enough for a down payment for a house, he married his girlfriend, who had just managed to graduate from high school. She had a sewing job. Together they didn't have a lot of money for luxuries, but they had enough to live on. They had four children.

Bounchanh worked a lot of overtime whenever his wife was on maternity leave so they could keep up the payments on their house. He hoped to move out to the suburbs someday so his children would not be tempted by the evil influences of city life and so they would be able to go to high-quality suburban schools.

Lao Man--Moderately Successful
(Not used in study)

Langsanh came to the U.S. when he was 13 in 1983.

He came with his parents, who were uneducated.

While he was in high school, they did not attend the parent-teacher conferences or push Langsanh to do his school work. They weren't able to help him, and he didn't listen to their advice because he thought they were ignorant. He completed high school.

Then he got a job in a factory. Soon he was able to buy a car and move out of his parents' home. They were pleased because he was able to "stand on his own two feet."

He married a Lao woman and they had three children. His parents took care of his children while he and his wife worked.

Hmong Man--Moderately Successful

Xeng arrived in the United States with his family in 1978, when he was 12 years old. He was the youngest of 11 children. Two of his older brothers and one sister were unable to escape from Laos.

Xeng's father had been a village leader in Laos.

After a few days in English class, Xeng's father decided he was too old to learn a new language. So he and his wife were supported by Social Security, and got AFDC for their four youngest children who still lived with them.

Xeng's father wanted him to work hard. He thought Xeng didn't get enough homework at the public school, so he asked his brothers to help pay Xeng's tuition at a private high school. Xeng did pretty well at school, and he got into a small private college in St. Paul where he majored in international relations. His uncles and cousins helped his father pay his tuition. Xeng's father hoped that when the Hmong were able to return to Laos, Xeng would become a minister in the new democratic government because of his high education.

After he finished college, Xeng couldn't find a job in his field. He borrowed more money from his relatives, telling them that he would be able to help them someday because he was a very well- educated man.

Xeng's uncle offered to help Xeng get a job in the factory where the uncle worked, but Xeng thought he was too well-educated to work in a factory. He was afraid that if he took a job in a factory, he might end up working in a factory all his life. He took a trip to France to visit his cousins.

Then he returned to Minnesota and married a 14-year-old girl who was in eighth grade at school and who was very kind and beautiful.

When Xeng still couldn't find a good job, he decided to go to law school. He and his wife lived with his mother and father, and his uncles all chipped in to pay his law school tuition. They were proud to have such a well-educated young man among their relatives. Xeng hoped that someday he would be a partner in a prestigious law firm.

Stories of Unsuccessful Southeast Asian Women and Men

Vietnamese Woman--Unsuccessful

Kim came alone to the U.S. in 1979 when she was 17 years old.

Her family was still in Vietnam. Her father used to work for a business company and her mother used to own a small grocery store. But they lost the job and the store when the Communists came. She was sent out with some relatives.

She was placed in a foster home and tried very hard not to upset her foster family.

She was a very nice girl; she got along well with everybody.

She was a very good student in high school. She spoke English well enough to take science classes and earned good grades. She was involved in many school activities and was one of the best students among the refugees.

Shortly after high school graduation, she got married to her boyfriend and moved out of her foster home.

She went to the University but had to work to make a living because her husband was also in college. They both worked and studied very hard.

In the middle of her second year, she got pregnant, so she quit school and worked full time to save money for the baby. She couldn't handle more stress from school.

Cambodian Woman--Unsuccessful

Dany came to the U.S. in 1983 when she was 16.

Her father was killed in Cambodia where the family suffered much during the Pol Pot years.

She came to the U.S. with her mother and six brothers and sisters. Her mother was upset about her experiences in Cambodia and in the camp, but she had no one to talk to about these problems.

Dany was placed in the junior year in high school because of her age, but she couldn't understand what was going on because she couldn't speak English well. She stopped attending many of her classes and began to hang out with boys who spent the day drinking and gambling. Finally, she dropped out of high school.

Dany didn't help her mother very much, but continued to spend time with the boys. Then she became pregnant, and her mother almost went crazy.

After Dany had her baby, she got welfare to support him.

Cambodian Woman--Unsuccessful

Socheat came to the U.S. in 1984 when she was 14.

Her family had been killed in Cambodia so she came alone and was placed with a foster family. She was unhappy because she felt that her foster family didn't understand her and she missed her own family. She also worried about what she would do when she was 18 and would have to leave her foster home.

She did not do well in high school because she didn't understand English well enough and she had missed many years of school while in the refugee camp.

A month before she received her high school diploma, Socheat eloped with a Cambodian boy she had met at school. She went to live with him and his mother. Socheat did not get along with her mother-in-law, who was sorry that her son had married before going to college. Socheat finished high school and then stayed at home. She got pregnant right away.

Socheat was so unhappy in her mother-in-law's home that she persuaded her husband to find an apartment for them. He got a job in an assembly plant and they tried to save money. However, it was difficult because he earned little money. They moved to California and got divorced so Socheat could collect welfare and they could save more money.

But Socheat's husband met another woman and he married her. Then he refused to take any more responsibility for Socheat and his child.

Lao Woman--Unsuccessful

Thongkham was a pretty girl. A lot of boys liked her. Her mother and father didn't want her to go out on dates, but she told them they had to learn to accept American ways. After she and her boyfriend had been going out for one year, she got pregnant.

Her parents called the boy's parents and the boyfriend agreed to marry Thongkham right away. She wasn't sure whether he really wanted to marry her or not, but they did love each other.

Thongkham's husband got a job frying hamburgers at McDonald's. His income was too low, so Thongkham dropped out of her junior year at high school

and took a job cleaning rooms at a hotel. After she had her baby, her mother babysat while she worked. She hoped someday she would be able to get her G.E.D. so she could get a better job.

Hmong Woman--Unsuccessful

Bee was a pretty girl. Many boys asked her to dance at the Hmong dances, and many boys came to her house. When she was 13 and in eighth grade, she married a 20-year-old man. At first she kept going to school but her husband was jealous and afraid that she might find another boyfriend at school. She had to keep her marriage secret because of her age, and he was afraid she might act like a single girl.

When Bee got pregnant, she was too shy to go to school so she dropped out. Her husband had to show her how to cook and take care of the baby because she didn't know very much about those things. She had one baby after another, and she didn't know how to make them obey her. By the time she was 20, she had five children. She was tired from looking after them, and her husband told her she looked like an old woman and was not much fun to be around anymore.

Bee thought she might be able to go back to school when her youngest was in kindergarten, but she was afraid she wouldn't do well in school so she didn't worry about her future and she got pregnant again. Her husband couldn't make enough money to support all those kids so he quit his job and they lived on welfare.

Vietnamese Man--Unsuccessful

Linh came to the U.S. in 1980, alone as an adolescent when he was 16.

His parents could not afford to escape so they sent him out alone.

He was placed in a foster home by a social service agency. He had a lot of problems with his foster parents, problems about rules, communication, culture, and his desire to be independent. He finally moved out to live with his Vietnamese older friend when he was in 12th grade.

At school he was first placed in tenth grade but he did not know any English; he had a hard time in all classes.

He did better in Math and Phy. Ed., so in the 11th grade, all the education he got from school was English, Math, Phy. Ed. and Lunch.

By 12th grade, he had a few simple Social Studies classes that taught him the names of the capitals of the 50 states of the U.S. He couldn't take any science classes due to English deficiency.

It was too hard for him to go to college or vocational school because of his low academic level and the lack of money. So he found a job in a Vietnamese restaurant doing dishes and made barely enough to pay for his room, food and car.

Cambodian Man--Unsuccessful

Phorn came to the U.S. in 1984 when he was 16.

He and his family suffered much during the war. His father was killed.

Phorn came to the U.S. with his five brothers and sisters and his mother. His mother had been traumatized by her experiences in Cambodia and in the refugee camp. She had no one to talk with about these problems. She received welfare to support her family.

Phorn was placed in the junior year in high school. He couldn't understand a lot of what was going on because of his poor English and because he had missed many years of school. He didn't do well and was not involved in any activities. He thought it wasn't worth working too hard, because he knew he could never catch up with the others. He also knew he would have to leave school at 18.

Finally, he eloped with a Cambodian woman and dropped out of school. His mother was very upset, because she had wanted him to finish school. Phorn and his wife had a child.

Phorn got a job in assembly and they tried to save money, but it was difficult because Phorn didn't earn much. They moved to California and got divorced so Phorn's wife could collect welfare and they could save more money.

Phorn met another woman, whom he eventually married. He refused to take any more responsibility for his first family.

Cambodian Man--Unsuccessful

Kith arrived in the U.S. in 1985 when he was 15.

He had lost many members of his family, including his father, in Cambodia.

His mother was still upset about all that had happened in Cambodia. She drank a lot at home and spent her leisure time gambling with the neighbors.

Kith had trouble learning in American schools because he couldn't concentrate for a long period of time. He never wanted to answer in class, and after a while the teachers just ignored him. His mother couldn't help him with anything. He knew he wasn't getting anywhere in school, so he dropped out.

Kith got a job as a dishwasher. It was heavy work for low pay, and he was always worn out when he got home.

When he was 20, he married his 17-year-old girlfriend and brought her to live at his mother's apartment. But his new wife was upset that his mother didn't pick up after herself, drank too much, and gambled away the grocery money. Kith's mother and wife quarreled over what television shows to watch. She wanted to move to a separate apartment with Kith, but he said they couldn't afford to. So his wife went back to live with her own father.

Kith stayed with his mother to make sure she was taken care of, but he didn't know how to help her with her drinking problem.

Lao Man--Unsuccessful

Khampai came to the United States when he was 18 in 1972.

He had spent a long time in a refugee camp and his parents had been killed.

He didn't have much education and he was too old to go to high school.

He lived in California and couldn't find a job because there were too many other refugees looking for work. He lived on welfare money and lived in a house where everyone used drugs. He became addicted to cocaine. His stepbrother heard about his problems and went to visit him in California. He found Khampai in a terrible state and forced him to return with him to Minnesota. There, the stepbrother helped him overcome his addiction.

With his stepbrother's help, he got an assembly job and found an apartment with other Laotians. He saved up a lot of money, but a friend convinced him to spend it on drugs. His stepbrother was very angry with him for wasting his money that way.

Eventually, Khampai was able to save enough money to buy a car, hoping to impress young American women. He finally married an American woman who didn't care about his reputation.

He didn't have much contact with Laotian society, preferring to follow the American lifestyle.

Lao Man--Unsuccessful

Bounmy came to the United States when he was 14 in 1984.

He came with his mother, who went to English school. She eventually got a job as a cook's assistant at a restaurant, but she was never able to make enough money to move out of the city. They lived in a tough neighborhood in Minneapolis, and at first Bounmy was afraid. His mother warned him not to act like the people in his neighborhood, but some of his neighbors befriended him and introduced him to marijuana and cocaine. He didn't take cocaine very often, only a few times a month, because he couldn't afford it.

Bounmy was way behind in school. His classmates laughed at him when he tried to speak English. At school, he learned not to say anything, but he dressed like a punk and looked very tough, so people were afraid of him. He couldn't see the point of staying in school when he wasn't learning anything, so he dropped out.

Bounmy couldn't get along with his mother so he went to live with some Lao teenagers who had come to the United States without their parents and had gotten an apartment together. They gambled and took drugs and sometimes got in fights with their neighbors.

Because he was illiterate, Bounmy qualified for General Assistance and he lived on that. Whenever he got his welfare check, he invited some people over to gamble, and sometimes he won enough to live well for a month.

Hmong Man--Unsuccessful

Chao was 13 years old when he arrived in the United States, and he was placed in seventh grade. He was slow in learning English, and he went to a lot of classes without ever really knowing what the teacher was talking about. He got his high school diploma even though he hadn't learned much and could only write a few basic sentences in English.

Chao was very shy about looking for a job because he thought he spoke English funny. He couldn't understand job application forms, and he didn't know enough English to go on to medical school. Because he was 18, his parents didn't get AFDC income for him anymore, but they shared their social security income with him, and he continued to live in their house. In the evening Chao went to visit his girlfriend, who was still in high school. He carried three pens in his front pocket so he would look like a well-educated man who could read and write. One evening his girlfriend asked him to help her write a letter in English. He was shy that he couldn't do it and he thought his girlfriend would look down on him so he never went back to visit her.

Chao got a part-time job cleaning office buildings. He thought it was terrible to have to clean American people's bathrooms, but he couldn't seem to find any other job. One day he noticed another Hmong man had started working as a manager in one of the offices he was supposed to clean. He was too shy to clean the office of another Hmong person so he quit his job that very day.

After Chao's parents died, he didn't qualify for any government support so he went to live with his younger brother, and took care of his brother's children while he and his wife went to work. His brother gave him room and board and money to go bowling once a week.

Stories of Successful Southeast Asian Women and Men

Vietnamese Woman--Successful

Lan came to the U.S. in 1975 with her parents when she was 9 years old.

Her mom used to be a chemistry teacher in a senior high school and her dad worked for the government in Vietnam.

They got divorced after 2 years of living in the U.S. Her mom got on welfare, received financial aid to go back to school, her brothers and sisters worked part time to help out. Her mom graduated from chemical engineering school and found a good job in a big company.

Lan was very intelligent and worked very hard at school. She graduated a salutarian from high school and received many scholarships, one of which paid for all her school cost and also for her summer work at Honeywell.

She graduated from the Institute of Technology with grade point average 3.7 and continued to work for Honeywell as a computer engineer.

She was not attached with anybody yet although she enjoyed friendships with her male friends. She thought she was still too young to commit to serious relationships and marriage.

Cambodian Woman--Successful

Sok came to the U.S. when she was 12 years old in 1980.

Her parents both went to work at assembly jobs and saved enough money to buy a new car and a modest house in the suburbs.

Sok tried hard at school, but was an average student.

After high school, she continued to live at home and got a job as a nursing assistant.

When she was 20, she married a Cambodian man.

Her husband had an electronics job. He took a second job after their marriage and they saved enough money to buy a house in the suburbs. Sok eventually took a course in data processing and got a better paying job.

They both worked hard and barely had time to see their friends. However, they had all the things their American neighbors had and they tried to live like Americans, without thinking about their past.

Cambodian Woman--Successful

Sarem came to the United States in 1980 when she was 13.

Her family survived the Pol Pot regime.

They came to the U.S. together. The family members helped each other a lot.

When Sarem was in Cambodia, she did well in elementary school.

She was a good student in the U.S. high school and then went to Nursing School at the University, where she also did well. While she was at the University, she worked part-time.

She was also active in the Cambodian Student Association. She helped her younger brothers and sister who went to the University to study computer science.

While she was at the University, Sarem married a TV repairman from a good family who later took night classes in order to continue his education.

Sarem got a job and kept an orderly home.

She and her husband had children, who were cared for by Sarem's parents while she worked. Later, the family was able to save money for a new car and a home.

Lao Woman--Successful

Chantanome was very studious in high school and didn't pay much attention to boys. She was interested in the problems refugees were having from the strain of moving to a new country, so she decided to study psychology. She got a scholarship to a college in St. Paul and lived at home while she earned her bachelor's degree. Then she got a master's degree in social work and was hired at a counseling center for refugees.

Lao people who needed help put a great deal of trust in her.

Her services as a counselor cost $80 an hour, and she took home quite a large income.

Occasionally she went out with a Lao man who was studying to be a doctor. After he had established his own medical practice, he asked Chantanome to marry him. He gave her a gold belt and jewelry and a new car for wedding gifts.

They lived a happy life together and everyone in the community looked up to them.

Hmong Woman--Successful

Pa Nyia was the middle girl in a family of eight children. While she was in high school, she got summer jobs for low-income youth. She enjoyed working, so she decided to study hard in school so she would have a chance to get a good job when she was older. Her older brothers encouraged her to do well in school, and when boys called to talk to her, they said she was not home.

Most of Pa Nyia's friends got married during high school and dropped out, so she felt a little lonely. She had thought about going to a four-year university but she was afraid she would be too old by the time she finished and no one would marry her. So she went to community college and took a nursing course. She finished in two years and got married to her boyfriend, who had just finished college.

Pa Nyia got a nursing job that paid $20,000 a year and had good benefits. She enjoyed her work because she liked the companionship of the other nurses and she liked to use her skills to help sick people. She also liked having a good income and knowing that she could rely on herself in case her husband ever got sick or got laid off. She decided to use birth control so she would not have too many children. She and her husband had only two children, three years apart, and she took off six months from her job each time. Then her mother-in-law took care of the children when she worked.

Vietnamese Man--Successful

Tam came to the U.S. in 1975 with his parents when he was 11 years old.

His parents used to work for the government in Vietnam, and his family was rescued by American helicopter from Saigon.

The church sponsored them and found jobs for the parents. They were not happy with the labor and low-paying jobs in the assembly line but they put up with the jobs and tried to support their children.

Tam was the oldest son. He obeyed his parents and worked very hard at school. He graduated from high school with high honor and enrolled in the Institute of Technology. He received financial aid to go to school.

He graduated as an electrical engineer and had many job offerings. He chose one in California.

He had to leave his girlfriend and did not know what would happen to this relationship. After all, he was only 22 years old and believed in true lovers whom distance could not separate. Lovers will wait but good jobs won't.

Cambodian Man--Successful

Chean arrived in the U.S. in 1981 when he was 15.

His father was one of the few educated men to survive the rule of Pol Pot.

He taught his son in the refugee camp in Thailand.

When Chean came to the U.S., he was able to catch up with his class. He did very well in science, and he went on to get a bachelor's degree and then a masters's degree in chemistry.

His research team found a cure for a terrible disease and won a Nobel prize for its work.

Chean married a Cambodian woman with a degree in social work, and they had two children.

Chean did not let his devotion to his work keep him from being involved in the community. He also worked very hard to get the Cambodian community in the United States to put aside its suspicions and to work cooperatively to celebrate Cambodian holidays and privide mutual assistance. His expertise was recognized by Americans, and he appeared on national television to talk about his scientific work and about the trials of the Cambodian people.

Cambodian Man--Successful

San came to the U.S. in 1983 when he was 12.

His mother had died in Cambodia, and he came with his younger sister and father who had been a pharmacist in Cambodia.

His father insisted that San study hard in school. In high school, San acquired a love of learning, and he was disappointed that his father didn't have enough money to send him to college.

San decided to become a Buddhist monk so he could become even more educated. His father had hoped that he would be a lawyer, but he agreed that San should make his own choice. As a monk, San had to be very self-disciplined. He went to the University and learned Computer Science.

The Cambodian community supported him and a few other monks and treated him with respect.

Lao Man--Successful

Bounchanh came to the United States in 1979 when he was 14.

His father was a military man who had worked with the Americans in Laos.

He got a job as an interpreter in a hospital. Bounchanh's mother could not work because of ill health.

The family did not have enough money to send Bounchanh to college. He was offered a scholarship, but he was afraid if he accepted it he might lose it after a few years because of poor grades. He was fairly good at math but still had trouble with English and social studies.

So, he enlisted in the Air Force and became a pilot. After serving bravely in the Middle East and Central America, he left the Air Force and studied to become a commercial pilot.

Once he was well-established in his career, at age 29, he married a Lao woman who worked as a data processor.

They bought a house in a nice suburb, on an acre of land, and eventually had two children.

Lao Man--Successful

Khamteum arrived in the U.S. in 1979 when he was 12.

His parents were not very educated when they arrived in the U.S.

They both studied English for two years and took assembly jobs. Khamteum's older brother and sister also worked, and the family saved up enough money to move out into the suburbs.

Khamteum's father would not drive him out to see his friends, but made him stay home and study. When Khamteum graduated from high school, he decided

to go to college. His parents and older brother and sister helped him pay his way. He graduated with a degree in business.

Then he worked for Control Data for seven years. When the future of Control Data did not look very promising, Khamteum decided to branch out and start his own business, using the managerial skills he had acquired in his job at Control Data. He opened a factory that made sensitive medical equipment for patients with heart problems. His business did well, and its number of employees grew to 200 in four years.

When he was 39, Khamteum got married. His wife also had a background in business and helped to manage a factory. They had three children and they were able to give their children whatever they wanted.

Hmong Man--Successful

Nhia is the third of eight children. In high school, he was above average in math and science but below average in English and social studies. His parents didn't have the money to send him to college, so he decided to get a factory job. The starting pay was low but he usually worked 60 hours a week, so he made enough money to take care of himself, his wife, and three children. After a few years, he was promoted to a better-paying assembly job, and he made about $24,000 a year. He bought his own house and a new van for himself and a car for his wife. His wife did some sewing at home for extra income, but after they had their fourth child, Nhia didn't want her to work so hard, so she gave it up.

Nhia was a very good backyard mechanic, and his cousins called him all the time to come and help them fix their cars. He didn't spend a lot of time with his wife and children but they appreciated how hard he worked to provide for them and he was well-loved by all his cousins.

APPENDIX C

Interview Worksheet Sample

Date: _____
Story Code: _____

YOUTHSTUDY WORKSHEET

Discussion Leader: _____
Observer: _____
Location: _____
Contact Person (name) _____ (org.) _____
(phone number) _____

Person	Age	Yrs in U.S.	Yrs School	Yrs U.S. School	Grade	Diagram
1.						
2.						
3.						
4.						
5.						
6.						
7.						
8.						

Is this story realistic (In what way? In what way is it not realistic?)

What changes would you make in this story to make it the story of your life?

Overall impressions (Who are these kids?)